

## ESC Barcelona 2009

### Congress News



## A mission to promote the subtle side of interventional cardiology

### The Andreas Gruentzig Lecture, ESC Congress 2009

#### Topics:

Percutaneous Cardiovascular Intervention (PCI)

#### Date :

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Interventional cardiologists are all too often viewed as plumbers, says Professor Christian Hamm, this year's ESC Andreas Gruentzig lecturer, who is on a quest to promote the subtle side of interventional cardiology. "I want to show how it's possible to bring biochemistry and 'plumbers' together for the benefits of patients," he says, "and how treatment improves when basic science gets translated into clinical practice."

A third-generation doctor, Hamm was initially drawn to German literature, but was won over by the practical aspects of cardiology and the opportunity to work with his hands. After medical school at the University of Hamburg, he learnt to "think scientifically" in the lab of Lionel Opie at the University of Cape Town, South Africa.

Hamm is probably best known for his work on biomarkers, publishing in 1992 the first ever report on the prognostic potential of troponin. In 1997 he showed that measuring troponin in the emergency room improved decision-making and had an effect on outcomes; two years later his group showed that patients with elevated troponin benefit from potent antiplatelet therapies. He is justifiably proud that troponin measurement has now become a routine part of clinical practice.

Despite his basic science credentials, Hamm still describes himself as an interventional cardiologist. Now director of the Department of Cardiology at Kerckhoff Heart Center in Bad Nauheim, Germany, he still performs over 500 interventional procedures each year, with a case load consisting of the most complex referrals.

Hamm lists his most significant contribution as the GABI study, one of the first multicentre randomised trials comparing bypass surgery with angioplasty. The study, published in the New England Journal of Medicine in 1994, showed that in terms of mortality balloon angioplasty was equivalent to bypass surgery in patients with multivessel disease.

### Hamm's ongoing projects

Today Hamm's major research interests revolve around the search for additional inflammatory markers to improve prognostic information in ACS. "While we've detected the markers, we still have the problem that we don't know how to improve prognosis," he says.

Hamm is also involved in stents, viewing DES as a transient phase. The next step, he says, will be bioabsorbable stents, but he is more interested in the new concept of a drug-eluting balloon; he is currently principal investigator of the PEPCAD III study comparing a paclitaxel-eluting balloon with a sirolimus stent.

Other interests involve percutaneous programmes for mitral and aortic valve replacement and repair, and non-invasive imaging. In championing non-invasive diagnostic approaches, Hamm is not at all protective about his interventional patch. "It's really important to make use of non-invasive procedures," he says, "because this approach offers the least discomfort to patients."

Hamm has also been a member of several practice guideline committees for the ESC, co-chairing the development group on ACS without ST elevation, published in 2007.

Hamm feels particularly honoured to have been asked to deliver the Andreas Gruentzig Lecture, because in 1994 he trained in Gruentzig's department in Atlanta, Georgia. "He was a fantastic researcher, and I admired him very much," says Hamm.

### **Notes to editor**

Biomarkers in interventional cardiology, ESC Andreas Gruentzig Lecture on Interventional Cardiology, Sunday 30 August 2009