

WELCOME ADDRESS

Dear colleagues, members of the German Transplantation Society (DTG) and guests of our annual meeting,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the 28th annual meeting of the DTG in Hannover.

Hannover is one of the transplant medicine strongholds of Germany. For us Hanoverian transplant surgeons, it is a honor and challenge to organize and chair this scientific meeting here. The Hannover Congress Center (HCC) is a downtown location close to the Hannover zoo and is well suited for the annual DTG meeting. The conference rooms are ideal in number and size, and there is a centrally located large space for the industrial exhibition. The tramway station is located just in front of the HCC, only five stops away from the Kroepcke, the main downtown area, close to the central train station. The large Congress Hotel am Stadtpark is situated right next to the HCC and all other downtown hotels are easily accessed a few tram stops away. Also only four tram stops from the HCC is the New Town Hall (Neues Rathaus), where our festive evening gala will take place on Friday, October 18th, 2019.

Not far from our conference center, Hannover Medical School (Medizinische Hochschule Hannover, MHH) is the only “medicine only” university in Germany, was founded in 1965 as a “reform university”, and remains as one of the leading academic medical centers in Germany. Hans Georg Borst, one of the founding fathers of cardiac surgery in Germany, was appointed chairman (Ordinarius) of surgery at MHH in 1968 and pioneered the idea of a “department structure” within the surgical field. His senior consultant (Oberarzt) Rudolf Pichlmayr became the director of visceral surgery in 1969 by splitting the Department of Surgery into a Division of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery (Borst), a Division of Visceral and Transplantation Surgery (Pichlmayr) and a Division of Trauma Surgery (Tscherne). Rudolf Pichlmayr developed the anti-lymphocyte serum used, for example, in the first cardiac transplantation in Cape Town in 1967. The first kidney transplant in Hannover was performed by Pichlmayr in 1968 and the first liver transplant in 1973. Roland Hetzer and Hans Georg Borst conducted the first heart transplant in 1983 and Borst and Axel Haverich the first combined heart–lung in 1987 and a single lung in 1988. All these developments were at the forefront of the respective German and worldwide movements and paved the way for the development of sizeable transplant programs in Hannover, boosted the appointment of a large series of both visceral and thoracic transplant surgeons from Hannover on

chairman positions all over Germany and beyond. The quest for the further scientific development of transplantation medicine remains especially strong in Hannover and has resulted in two consecutive Collaborative Research Consortia (CRC, Sonderforschungsbereich/SFB) Transplantation, funded by the DFG for roughly 25 consecutive years, led by the gastroenterologist Michael Manns since 1997.

In those early days of transplantation, a very different set of problems prevailed. While then, survival was mediocre by modern standards, today we recognize one- (five-) year survival rates of more than 90 (70) % for several solid organs. However, this medical success story is limited by other factors: The striking lack of organ donors continues to increase the discrepancy between organ availability and need. Waiting times of sometimes above 10 years for dialysis patients as well as death on the waiting list are the real-life problems of our time and have reached an unbearable level. After a row of years without any political initiatives addressing these problems, luckily, the current federal minister of health, Jens Spahn, has brought new momentum to the case. During the last year, a law improving the organ donation situation in the hospitals has successfully been passed, and the Bundestag vote on the presumed consent for organ donation (Widerspruchsloesung) is imminent, i. e. will presumably be conducted still in 2019.

Thus, in this year’s conference, already the opening session starts with views on chances and shortcomings of organ donation. Living donation will be discussed in the first plenary session on Thursday, October 17th. Friday’s, October 18th, plenary session will be devoted to *ex vivo* organ perfusion, the up-to-date surgical technique potentially enabling improved organ preservation as well as assessment and even improvement of extended criteria donor organs, thereby increasing the donor pool. The third and final plenary session, held on Saturday, October 19th, will consequently focus on the future perspectives of transplantation. The current state of xenotransplantation, the arising concept of interdisciplinary transplant centers, cardiac donation from DCD donors and the practical effects of the 2019 legal efforts to improve organ donation in Germany.

Furthermore, the aspect of continuing education is a central element of our scientific program: In our three “Master Classes”, for example, the “Relevance and Treatment of Donor-Specific Antibodies”, the specifics of “Pediatric Transplantation” and “Organ Replacement Therapies”, i. e. that is, state-of-the-art hemodialysis, extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, circulatory assist device and liver assist device therapies will be discussed.

A special treat will be a hands-on workshop on multi-organ procurement with experienced surgical tutors on site.

With all these elaborate cutting-edge topics, there will certainly remain still enough time for a sociable get together and networking. The gala evening in the New Town Hall, an eclectic Wilhelmina historical building, will only be one opportunity.

We are looking forward to welcome you to the 28th annual meeting of the DTG and expect—together with you

—a fruitful and hopefully informative, interesting and rewarding congress in Hannover.

In the name of the organization committee and the board of the DTG

Prof. Dr. Gregor Warnecke,
Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Axel Haverich
and Dr. Wiebke Sommer