

World Congress on Drowning 2002: Lessons learnt - Research and developments since

Bierens J[†]

Professor in Emergency Medicine, VU University Medical Centre, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Summary

The first society in the world active in the field of trying to improve the outcome of drowning victims, *de Maatschappij tot Redding van Drenkelingen* (The Society to Rescue People from Drowning), was established in Amsterdam in 1767. Other societies, such as the Royal Humane Society in London, England, soon followed this example. The growing realisation that human initiatives and activities of various kinds could result in a reduction in the number of drowning victims caused rescue societies to be set up and scientific attention on the problem of drowning from various sources to increase.

The (re-)invention of effective resuscitation techniques by the late Peter Safar (1924-2003) in 1960 meant a revolution in the prospects of victims of sudden cardiac arrest. The scientific activities which Safar and his group developed has also caused an upturn in interest in drowning victims. It seems that the same may hold true for drowning as for cardiac arrest victims and that better prospects are on the horizon. To quote Safar: "it is great when we can arrange death to come back later".

Thus many disciplines felt that a lot of progress had been made for drowning victims in the last decades of the 20th century. On the other hand it was surprising that research papers on the subject of drowning were scarce and that research meetings in this field were few. It was not surprising then that, in 1995, the oldest society in the field of drowning in the world, the *Maatschappij tot Redding van Drenkelingen*, took the initiative to organise a meeting where experts on all aspects of drowning (epidemiology, prevention and innovation in technology, rescue, resuscitation, medical aspects, hypothermia, water-related disasters and diving) could *meet* and discuss these issues.

The World Congress on Drowning, which was held in Amsterdam in 2002 for the first time, gathered hundreds of world experts from various fields of expertise to speak, listen, discuss and learn from one another.

The Handbook on Drowning, the first ever compilation of knowledge on drowning, was published in 2006. It has been written by a great number of the experts at the World Congress, by the various task forces, as well as other individuals. It is unique in that it also contains the documents which were the result of the various consensus meetings during the World Congress and the final recommendations of the World Congress on Drowning.

This presentation will expand on the lessons we have learnt since 2002, and some of the research and development completed or commenced since the World Congress on Drowning.

References

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[†]Corresponding author

Joost J.L.M. Bierens, Professor, MD, PhD, MCDM
Department of Anesthesiology
VU University Medical Centre
De Boelelaan 1117,
1081 HV Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Email: jbierens@vumc.nl