

Role of Virus in Inner Ear Disorders

I remember it as if it was yesterday. It happened during one of the first international meetings which I attended as a young resident, back in the mid-80s. During a session about the treatment of sudden deafness assisted by many renowned doctors and professors, I dared to ask an inconvenient question. I asked if it was adequate and ethical to propose treatments against a disease when nothing about its etiology was known. A very rude answer came from an authoritarian French professor. I would have never imagined that he had such a sophisticated English vocabulary. He flatly called me a greenhorn, half-wit, idiot! For him, unethical was *not* to treat sudden deafness. I was not able, under such a fire, to argue against the rationale of his opinion. For him there should be no doubts that a treatment *had* to be done, whatever the cause of the disease, the benefit, the cost, and the side effects of the treatment. This anecdote illustrates that the two concepts 'doctors' and 'ignorance' are antinomic. In an etymological sense, a 'doctor' is the one who knows and teaches. In this definition, there is no place for ignorance, or even doubt. And for some doctors, this assertion is not debatable!

Thanks to research much more is known nowadays. However, the physiopathology of the inner ear is still not fully understood. The causes of inner ear disorders remain somewhat mysterious. I appreciate that doctors and scientists in the field agreed to participate in a debate about the role of virus in inner ear disorders. Each participant provided an excellent manuscript that was submitted and criticized by the others. I thank them warmly. We all hope that this debate will be useful to readers in understanding why the conclusions of the many studies published on this topic are still controversial. The opinions expressed in this issue may raise additional comments from our readers. We will be pleased to extend the debate publishing our readers' comments in the next issue of *ORL*. We sincerely hope this debate will be an enriching contribution to our field.

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