

have to be distinguished. (Operational frequency is at 16 2/3 Hz.) There was no indication of an association between 16 2/3 peak values of the magnetic field and a risk for child leukemia. A slight increase of the risk was detected when observing average fields. Magnetic field components produced by the trains were neglected but appeared to be only of slight relevance for the results of the 50-Hz study concerning child leukemia.

- A report of the Health Council of the Netherlands should also be mentioned. This report was not necessarily an epidemiologic contribution but is noteworthy all the same, because it offered a very consistent and objective summary of to-date knowledge about field effects of mobile communication in adults and especially in children. The authors saw no reason to recommend limited use of mobile phones by children.

Poster presentations included other contributions with more or less epidemiological contents. One poster dealt with studies on survival rates of children with leukemia in the vicinity of television transmitters. This study included 123 diagnosed cases of acute lymphatic leukemia. An association between the distance from television transmitters and life duration of ill children was found. However, the poster lacked data on social status and domestic situation, traffic density, and other known and much-discussed influence factors

which make this simple interpretation seem highly uncertain and preposterous.

Some first results of the „Childhood Cancer, Leukemia and Electromagnetic Field“ study (CCLEF) from the United Kingdom were published in advance as a poster. However, we should wait for the study to be completed. The authors themselves addressed some shortcomings of their study.

*Prof. Dr. Dr. Otto Petrowicz  
Scientific Coordinator, EMVU at the Technical  
University, Munich*

As always, this meeting report will close with some general ruminations on the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Bioelectromagnetics Society. There certainly were important changes compared to previous annual meetings mainly concerning program selection criteria and the acceptance of contributions (peer review process). However, this new selection process was not applied rigorously enough; in spite of it, there was a number of contributions rather reminding of a publicity campaign, or obviously faulty papers such as the description of a double-blind design for investigating permanent magnetic fields. But, the Society should be given more time to grow accustomed to the new guidelines and to apply them which may take a few years – it is a painful, but necessary process that will frustrate some old expectations or cut down on privileges. Surprisingly, the number of members has dropped. Though the departing president of the BEMS, Asher Sheppard, insists that this trend is not alarming, the Society has to take appropriate measures in order to stop this and to enhance attractivity and image of the association. So, for example, the abstract book could be published also on CD-ROM, or the „Bioelectromagnetics“ journal could opt for a more modern outfit. Regarding contents, international quality standards should receive more attention, especially when aiming at improving the impact factor according to the Journal Citation Index. This, and other tasks will

GL  
**BEMS:**  
**chal**

# taking up the challenges of the future

be the responsibility of the new president, Frank Prato. We can only wish him well. The mentioned decision to accept presentations and include them in the abstract book only after meeting enrolment makes sense. It may be that this has led to a decrease in the number of poster presentations. However, the decision is logical and right. It does not do to register abstracts from all over the world that thus can be cited without the authors later on taking part in discussion, and about 30% of the space reserved for posters remaining unused, as happened last year in St. Paul. Due to the request of the Research Association for Radio Applications, this year there will be a slogan characterizing the meeting. But, year after year, such a slogan is more difficult to find. Previous reports have already pointed out that no spectacular findings were presented. Nothing has changed insofar as there are strong pro and contra lobbies. Old names and faces have vanished, new ones have appeared – which is only natural. Perhaps you could say that the BEMS takes up the challenges of the future by striving for a more scientifically oriented appearance and higher quality standards. However, there is still a lot to do, and the board of the BEMS certainly tries to account for this (see the bulletin issued in the Bioelectromagnetics newsletter no. 166, May/June 2002).

Let me add some brief remarks on this year's contributions presented during ple-

nary sessions, lectures, and posters: The „pro“ supporters surely will have recognized the contributions confirming their position, as well as the „contra“ group. Both groups should know, however, that presentations and abstracts did not represent „state-of-the-art knowledge“, and, above all, lacked previous scientific review. During the meeting, the necessary steps of scientific validation were discussed again and again: publication in renowned peer-reviewed journals, multiple replication for being recognized as scientifically accepted, etc. The internationally renowned expertise of the respective research group in its special field is very important, too. Fact is that the majority of reports on research results will not go beyond a „preliminary status“ and, if at all, will only be published in journals of reasonable reputation, or on web sites of alternative professional and interest groups presented as ultimate evidence for health-damaging effects. In this context, the question arises if events such as the BEMS ultimately are obsolete, a loss of time and money. But this impression is wholly wrong. Events such as the BEMS are the spearhead of research. They serve as a forum for presenting and discussing new research projects promoting the international exchange of scientific experience. Outstanding studies are recognized and discussed by experts; own test replications, or replications done by other independent laboratories, are initiated. Non-significant,

faulty or biased studies are screened by scientific review.

Some words on this year's location, Québec and the hotel Loews le Concord: Both were a remarkable relief compared to last year's quarters in St. Paul. We all look forward to next year's event when the meeting shall take place in Maui, Hawaii. For many non-Americans, though, this will cause financial strain, especially for members from Eastern Europe. Hopefully, the attractions of the location and, above all, of the scientific program will compensate for high travel and lodging costs.

*Prof. Dr. Dr. Otto Petrowicz  
Scientific Coordinator of the EMVU at the  
Technical University Munich*