

***SYMPOSIUM ON MOUNTAIN MEDICINE  
AT ARMY MEDICAL COLLEGE, RAWALPINDI (PAKISTAN) ON 25  
MAY, 1999***

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The armed conflicts have always posed special problems for the medical profession. Modern warfare fought with weapons having devastating power causing casualties on mass scale has taxed the ingenuity and resources of medical personnel all over the world. Even in peace time, the scourges like floods, earthquake, fire, avalanche, trauma, cold injuries and high altitude hazards continue to pose new challenges. It is rational for the medical corps to conduct research in high altitude medicine in addition to its service role.

It is a lamentable but nonetheless incontrovertible fact that most of the serious losses that occurred from high altitude disorders and cold injuries to the troops deployed in mountainous areas should not have occurred. It would be less than candid not to acknowledge this painful truth. The losses occurred due to cold injuries because the lessons of the past (WWII) were not learnt. In order to institutionalize this medical problem, the High Altitude Medical Research Cell (HALMARC) was established. The need for such establishment cannot be over emphasized when a significant number of troops are deployed at high altitude in a glaciated terrain.

A Pak-Swiss Expedition climbed on Skyang Kangri in the Northern Area of Pakistan from May to June, 1999. Maj Gen M. Shuaib Qureshi (Retd), Professor of Medicine co-ordinated between the Swiss delegation and High Altitude Medical Research Cell (HALMARC) to organise a one-day symposium on Mountain Medicine in the Ayub Auditorium at Army Medical College, Rawalpindi, Pakistan. With the hectic efforts by Brig (Dr) Muhammad Aslam, Professor of Physiology and Officer In charge of HALMARC, it took a practical shape at a short notice. The symposium was chaired by Professor Ulrich F. Gruber, MD, Prof Emeritus of Surgery, Consultant in Occupational Toxicology Sky Instructor, University of Basel, Switzerland and the Secretarial Assistance was provided by Brig (Dr.) Muhammad Aslam. The introductory remarks were given by Maj Gen (Prof) Najam Khan, Professor of Surgery & Principal, Army Medical College, Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

The programme comprised of as follows:-

Children at Altitude. Dr. Susi Kriemler, Zurich, Switzerland.

Spinal Cord Injuries Rescue and rehabilitation, Dr. Monica Brodmann, Basel, Switzerland.

Climbing High/Diving Deep. Dr. Walter Pteithofer, Goldau, Switzerland.

Treatment of Pain and Surgical. Dr. Urs Wiget, Sion, Switzerland

Avalanche Survival and Treatment of hypothermia. Dr. Bruno Durrer, Lauterbrunnen, Switzerland.

The symposium was attended by 300 participants consisted of undergraduate medical students, Faculty members and the Swiss delegate. The concluding remarks and note of thanks was offered by Maj Gen (Prof) Mahboob Alam Shah, Prof of

Pharmacology, Army Medical College, Rawalpindi (Pakistan). In the end, the college souvenirs were presented to the delegates by the Principal as a token of appreciation and remembrance.

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