

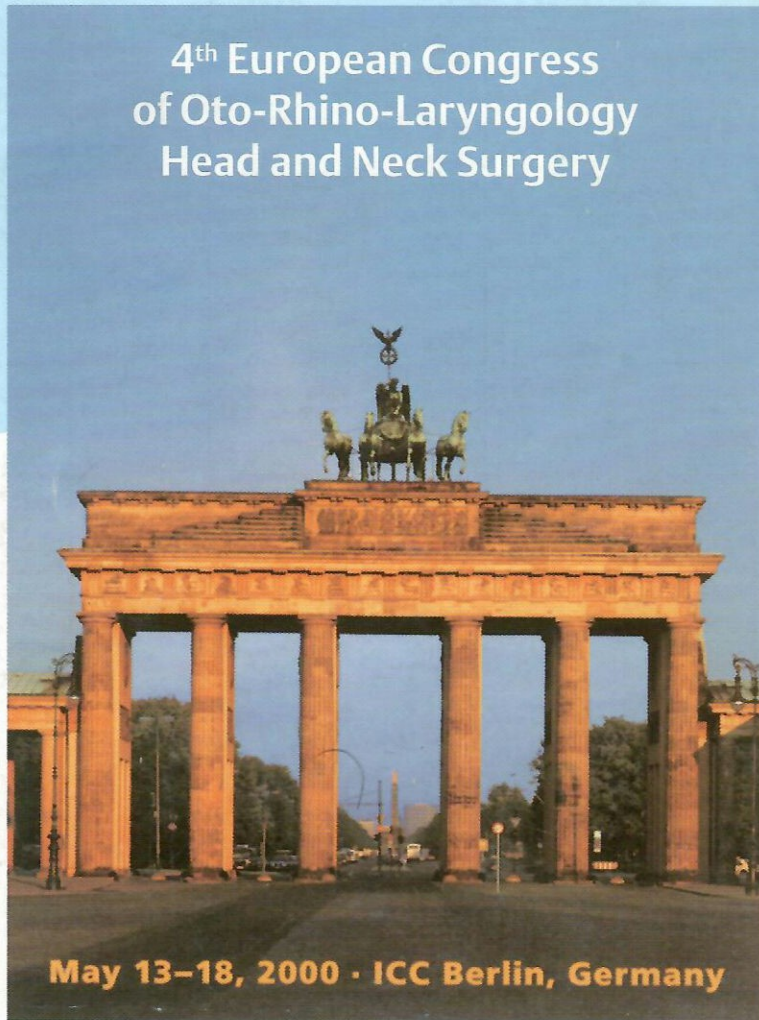


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Abstracts

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Epidemiology of olfactory damage

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Chemoception is one of the oldest and most archaic senses. The information is already highly integrated in the olfactory bulb in direct relationship with the limbic area. Difficulty in clinical assessment, impossibility of cure and the apparently secondary impact on life quality has made olfaction a "Cinderella-sense". Perhaps the most interesting aspect of olfaction is its intimate relationship with the emotional sphere of the human being and its importance on general wellbeing and sexual behaviour. Large economic interests in the perfume industry have recently helped in stimulating olfactory research. In this study we have analysed the incidence and distribution towards age, sex and etiology of hyposmia. The study extended on the population that presented itself at the Olfaction Study Centre of the Ospedale Maggiore di Milano from 1992 to 1998. We have studied 572 persons with ENT examination and fiberoptic endoscopy, completed by X-Ray and CT scan examination if necessary for general assessment. All patients have been subjected to standard sniff-test with presentation of different volumes of air saturated with olfactory substances. If malingering was suspected and in other selected cases Doty's UPSIT test was performed. Age range was from 5 to 90 years. Sex distribution was 58% female and 42% male. Age by sex distribution showed a significant shift from male to female prevalence by age. Percentage by cause distribution was postviral 26.92%, transmissive 23.78%, idiopathic 20.28%, posttraumatic 13.63%, malingering 5.07%, hereditary 3.50%, iatrogenic 2.62%, neurologic 2.45% and workplace exposure 1.75%. Overall age distribution was bimodal with a peak at 21-30 and at 51-60 years decade. Significant differences in prevalence at different decades for each etiology could be assessed and presbiosmia seemed of lesser importance. Our data give a significant look at the prevalence of causes and the age and sex distribution of hyposmia in a general population.