

Prof. Dr J. Dankmeijer

Dean of the Medical Faculty of the University of Leiden

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen.

As dean of the Faculty of Medicine of the State University of Leiden, I have the honour to welcome you on behalf of our Faculty on your visit to Leiden for the 6th International Congress of Audiology.

I certainly need not go into details why the field of audiology has become so important that now already for the sixth time specialists from many countries are meeting in an international congress devoted to this subject. I do want to stress, however, once more the usefulness of such meetings, in which the various research workers studying different methods can meet to discuss one single organ, bringing together morphology, physiology and clinical aspects. If there is one organ that has a special need for a wide variety of research technics, it is certainly the sense-organ of hearing, which in so many ways still remains a mystery for us. Its rather inaccessible topographical situation, its extremely characteristic microscopic structure which remains far from being understood, its physical principles, its close connections with the nervous system, its interrelation with functions of the mind and its numerous disturbances under pathological conditions and in ageing, are so many reasons why sound diagnostics and treatment can only be attained in cooperation of clinical workers, research workers in what we sometimes call the basic medical disciplines, biologists and physicists. If we also consider that hearing is essential to one of the most important forms of communication between human beings and that music is one of our highest arts, then it will be evident that audiology is a branch of medical science which requires intensive study and extensive expert application.

It is a source of great satisfaction to our Faculty that you have chosen the old University town of Leiden for your 6th congress, under the direction of our colleague for oto-rhino-laryngology, my dear friend Van Dishoeck who — in his department — has developed an important centre for audiological research and who, with his staff — many of whom have been very active in the preparation and organisation of this congress — may consider this congress as a general token of appreciation for his important work. Leiden University in the past has repeatedly contributed to the development of audiology. I only need to remind you of the work of my illustrious predecessor of the early 18th century, the anatomist and surgeon J. J. Rau, who made a detailed study of the ossicles and was the first to give a precise description of the malleus and the relative position of the ossicles. Of his beautiful preparations

a few fine specimens remain in the museum of the Laboratory of Anatomy and Embryology.

On behalf of the Faculty I would formulate the wish that the urge for knowledge of our illustrious predecessors may continue to prevail amongst the participants of this congress and that modern methods and facilities in medical research may carry you towards further important results. I wish you all a pleasant stay in Leiden and in the Netherlands and I hope that this congress will be a full success for the participants and for the organizers. Some of you have already had a few straneous days in participating in the course on audiological tests. I hope that the next few days will also give you time for recreation and the opportunity to appreciate some of the characteristics of our small but pleasant country.

Thank you for having come.