



The Newsletter of European Medical Specialists

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Outcomes of the UEMS Sections & Boards Meetings Brussels, 21st February 2009

For further information on issues covered in this Newsletter, do not hesitate to contact the UEMS Secretariat.

On 21st February, the Presidents and Secretaries of UEMS Sections & Boards convened in Brussels for their annual meeting with the Executive. This meeting was an occasion to discuss major items of interest to the medical profession and currently active on the European agenda. The main issues dealt with at the meeting notably included:

The EACCME

The overall operation of the system was discussed, particularly in regard to the reviewing process carried by the UEMS S&B. Greater commitment to this work was called for and the opportunity for S&B to develop specific accreditation boards was raised.

Further discussions focused on the usability of the web application form. The potential for further improving the current system was particularly stressed. For this purpose, the UEMS Executive has commissioned the assistance of external advisors.

The work of the EACCME Taskforce was also reported on, which notably encompassed:

- The implementation of e-Learning accreditation

- New guidelines on commercial sponsorship
- The compliance with standards currently in use (D9908rev)

Involvement was also requested from the S&B in raising awareness on the EACCME among the medical community.

The EACPGT

The launch of this platform dedicated to the harmonization and accreditation of postgraduate training was announced. The background and preparatory work in this regard was presented. S&B potentially interested in launching a pilot for their particular specialty were invited to identify themselves.

Specialist issues

Training curricula and programmes for the specialties of Paediatric Surgery, Emergency Medicine and Clinical Genetics and the proposal to establish a division of Interventional Radiology were endorsed.

Medico-political issues

- The Green Paper on EU workforce for health

Contributions from the S&B had been requested in order to elaborate an extended contribution from the UEMS to the open consultation launched by the Green Paper. A certain number of



ideas were exchanged during the meeting. The final UEMS contribution will be completed following receipt of additional written comments.

- The EU Communication on Telemedicine

The outcomes of the High Level Conference on e-Health held in Prague from 18th to 20th February 2009 were reported. A particular emphasis was put on the legal issues arising from the use of telemedicine and e-Health services, particularly in relation to the draft directive on patient's rights in cross-border healthcare.

All documents have been displayed on the UEMS website and an extensive report of that meeting will be made available soon. Please contact the Secretariat of UEMS for any further information.

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Joseph Hoet Research Award - 2009

The DPSG (Diabetic Pregnancy Study Group, EASD) announces the Sixth Joseph Hoet Research Award (JHRA) to be given on the occasion of the Annual Meeting of the Study Group (Rome, Italy), 25th - 28th September 2009

The award will consist of a commemorative plaque, a diploma-certificate and 5.000 € for the awardee, sponsored by Novo Nordisk Pharma. The sum includes travel expenses and registration. The call for nominations is open on a competitive basis, for excellence of research in the field of Diabetes and Pregnancy, under the following conditions:

The candidate must be younger than 50 years on 1st January of the year of the award.

There is no restriction concerning the nationality of candidates.

The JHRA will be given in relation to research of excellence in the field of Diabetes and Pregnancy (Basic or Clinical) manifested by publications with important contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the field. Before 28th April 2009, the Chairperson of the DPSG should receive all documents for application as attachments to an email. This shall include:

- 1) The candidate's Curriculum Vitae with complete bibliography;
- 2) The most relevant publications (not more than 6 - .pdf files);
- 3) a statement by the candidate, explaining the manner in which the research and the publications have contributed

to the advancement of knowledge in the area of Diabetes and Pregnancy. Such a statement should not exceed 1.000 words;

Additional letters of support of relevant authorities in the field of Diabetes and Pregnancy may be also enclosed (.pdf files).

The jury to judge the award will be formed by the five active members of the DPSG Board. Only in exceptional cases, if the jury cannot make a final choice between 2 final candidates with almost identical evaluation, the DPSG Chair's vote will be decisive.

The recipient of the prize is expected to give the Joseph Hoet Lecture during the annual DPSG meeting, describing his/her most important scientific achievements, and is



also expected to write a respective review either as a PowerPoint presentation or as a 2-3 pages to be presented at the DPSG home page.

Applications should be addressed to the Chairperson of DPSG:

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Public Health - EC Initiatives

EU Action on Alzheimer

According to recent data collection, an estimated 20 million people, i.e., 4% of European population, are affected by Alzheimer either directly or through family members.

This neurodegenerative disease was at the centre of the attention of the Health Strategy adopted by the European Commission in 2007, not only because of the burden it

represents, but also because of the strong inequalities in terms of ap-



proaches and outcomes currently used in European countries. Hence, the European Commission intends to launch, in 2009, a proposal for an

Initiative on Alzheimer as a way of reversing this situation.

The main objective of this Initiative is to draw attention to this disease, especially in the current context of demographic ageing. Stimulate benchmarking through improved sharing of knowledge and good practice on Alzheimer and related conditions, with accurate scientific research data are other of the expected

outcomes.

Alzheimer is becoming a worrying disease, especially in the current context of growing ageing population in Europe. As a result, further cooperation and exchange of knowledge and best practice is necessary to improve the quality of life of people suffering from Alzheimer disease and disseminate new ways of treatment throughout Europe as well.

Public Health - EC Initiatives

EU Platform for Action on Cancer

The European Commission recently announced that it is preparing to launch in the summer 2009 an EU Platform for Action on Cancer which will aim to target more efficiently this major European burden of disease and ill health. Cancer is widely recognised as a key public health concern, affecting annually 3.2 million Europeans with ratios of death ranging from 23% for women to 29% for men. The most frequent forms of cancer are breast, colorectal and lung cancers. Basically, the main Commission's concern was to note that cancer does not affect all European countries in the same way. For instance, the occurrence of cervical cancer is four times higher in Bulgaria than in Finland. Larynx and trachea/bronchus/

lung cancer mortality is more than triple as high in Hungarian than in Cypriot men. Given this situation, the Commission felt there is a urgent need for action to be taken in order to halt such strong differences, namely through the creation of a framework for identifying and sharing information capacity and expertise in cancer prevention and control.

In regard to the provisions of the EU Treaties, the main responsibility for addressing cancer remains in the remit of the EU Member States. Notwithstanding, given that an estimated one third of cancer cases could be prevented, EU authorities decided to take further actions so as to stimulate cooperation between Member States and to complement national poli-

cies with a view to improve public health.

The policy objectives of this initiative will cover the following areas:

- Health information and dissemination;
- Primary prevention, notably through publicity campaigns, preventative treatment, and updating the "European Code against Cancer";
- Secondary prevention, by means of cancer screening programmes whose implementation would be fostered and quality monitored through the development of European accreditation criteria;
- Priorities for cancer research, through increasing cancer surveillance and encouraging cross-national and - sectional cooperation.

The Commission objecti-

ve, in introducing this bottom-up approach, is to promote a fruitful debate between national authorities, experts and stakeholders and a continuous exchange of best practice and ongoing developments in cancer prevention and control, in a consultation process deemed to start soon after the Platform is launched. In the meanwhile, the Commission has invited stakeholders who hold a particular interest in this issue to get involved in the preliminary discussions which will be organised for the establishment of the Platform. Comments were particularly welcomed as regards the areas in cancer research and treatment to be covered as well as on the approach taken by the Commission services itself.

HIV/AIDS in the EU and neighbouring countries

As of the end of December 2006 there have been 327,068 reported AIDS diagnoses in Europe. More than half of these people have already died. To halt this situation, the European Commission plans to launch in autumn this year a second action plan and strategy on Combating HIV/AIDS in the EU and Neighborhood (2010-2014) to promote the prevention of HIV and to improve the quality of life of people living with HIV/AIDS.

After the 2005 Communication on combating HIV/AIDS within the European Union and in the neighbo-

ring countries (2006-2009), the Commission is preparing a new strategy and action plan to update the aforementioned strategy, setting, this way, a forum for discussion and exchange of good practices between Member States.

This renewed strategy intends to address certain issues such as the high costs involved in the treatment, or the follow-up and the development of functional infrastructures for patients. The stigmatization of the disease and the discrimination that infected people suffer, the increased

mobility within Europe and the dissemination of infections associated with it are also some of the major focus of the document. In order to minimise these situations, this new communication includes as main policy goals to:

- Strengthen supranational coordination in the combat against HIV/AIDS
- Stimulate exchange between stakeholders addressing HIV/AIDS;
- Involve neighboring countries in the whole process;
- Campaigns to diminish the number of new HIV

infections and improve the situation of people living with HIV/AIDS;

- Strengthen political dialogue and cooperation in public health issues with neighboring countries;
- The European Commission expects, this way, to diminish the burden of a disease affecting a rising number of European citizens. Given the increased mobility and migration within the European territory, it is urgent to take measures to prevent further spreading of this virus throughout the continent.



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**For further
information
on issues
covered in this
Newsletter,
do not hesitate
to contact
the UEMS
Secretariat.**

EVENT REPORTS

Opening of the ESP House in Brussels

On Friday February 27th 2009, the European Society for Pathology inaugurated its "House of Pathology" in Brussels. The ESP House is located very close to the Brussels South Station and very easily accessible both by train and from the airport. Dr. B. Maillet (Secretary-General and Pathologist himself) gave a short address as did Prof. F. Bosman, president of the ESP and Prof. A. Cardesa, the ESP president who took the initiative to create the ESP House. The speakers stressed that it is the intention of the Executive Committee of the ESP to strengthen even more the already very close collaboration with the UEMS Section and Board. We all look forward to a fruitful collaboration.



*Dr B. Maillet
& Prof. F. Bosman*

Access to treatments: which rights for patients?

In the context of the proposal for a directive on the implementation of patients' rights to cross-border healthcare, a discussion was organised on the 17th February 2009 by the European Voice Health. Chaired by Dr Phil Hammond (UK-based general practitioner and journalist) this panel brought together several experts of the subject who had the occasion to express their opinion on the issue. A central personality of the discussion, MEP John Bowis (British Conservative (EPP-ED) and appointed European Parliament's Rapporteur on the proposed Directive) was trying to play a down talk of controversy, aiming to bring people together and to find the biggest possible consensus.

By setting out his views Mr. Bowis didn't hesitate to admit that they had a problem in the European Parliament rising from certain MEPs who were contrary to this Directive due, as he stated, to their 'misunderstanding of what this is about'.

According to Mr. Bowis the proposal of the Directive was a 'win-win' which would benefit the patient, the patient's home country and the country providing cross-border treatment.

Several questions were asked to Mr. Bowis concerning safety concerns, such as:

- What happens if something goes wrong with a treatment abroad?
- What happens in the case of drugs being available in one country and not in another?
- What should happen when a treatment that had been offered to a patient in his/her home country was withdrawn?

Special attention was given to the Health Technology Assessment (HTA) and more specifically on patient involvement in HTA, the process of scientific, social, ethical and economic evaluation of new drugs, surgical procedures and other medical treatments. In the draft Directive the European Commission proposes setting up a European network on HTA (Article 17), but, as the debate revealed, many people felt national HTA mechanisms needed to be improved.

By the end of the debate, there was some discussion about the way the directive might affect health systems in the Member States. Mr. Bowis underlined that an agreement on the directive would be 'the art of the possible' and it would not be advisable to widen the scope beyond what the rulings from the European Court of Justice have provided for.

Mr. Bowis closed the debate by expressing some very optimistic remarks about the likely process of the directive. He maintained that the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers were very close, and an agreement on first reading might be possible.

Latest news with regard to this issue stated that the objective of a vote in the EP ENVI committee was postponed, thereby reducing the likelihood to have an EP agreement in first reading before the June's elections. Further information will follow in the next issues of our Newsletter.