



EBCOG & UEMS Section of O & G

President's Newsletter

May 2010

As we all know, tempus fugit, and the European Congress in Antwerp, which has been so much anticipated for the last few years, is now finally over. It is too early to have all the final details, but the Congress was certainly well attended and informal feedback suggests that the participants, from 64 countries in total, really enjoyed the innovative and stimulating programme as well as the great hospitality of the city of Antwerp and the opportunity to meet old colleagues and make new friends. If you were able to attend, I would like to thank you and to say I hope you enjoyed your time at the Congress. It would also seem highly appropriate at this juncture to thank the Secretary-General and Chair of the Antwerp Scientific Committee, Prof Chiara Benedetto, the Vice-President, Dr Johan Van Wiemeersch and the local Belgian organising committee for all their work for the Congress and congratulate them on their success.

I would also like to extend a warm invitation to you, and to those of you who were unable to be in Antwerp, to join us at the next European Congress in beautiful Tallinn, Estonia, on 9th - 12th May 2012.

As is usual, immediately after the end of the Congress, EBCOG held its spring Council meeting. Many issues were discussed, although it was an unusually short meeting, but one of the important decisions Council made was to elect Glasgow, UK, as the host city for the 2014 European Congress. I would like to warmly congratulate Glasgow on winning the bid and to offer my sincere commiserations to Istanbul, the other candidate city, in what was a closely fought contest.

One of the very positive aspects of Council meetings is that it gives EBCOG and our national society members an excellent opportunity to exchange the latest information about what is happening both at European and national level. EBCOG was delighted to hear that Turkey has now reversed its decision to reduce specialist training time to four years and that the training period of five years has been restored. Equally, following our correspondence with the Greek Minister of Health, we were pleased to hear the encouraging news that the medical schools in Greece are planning a joint meeting with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education to address the problems affecting specialist training there. Always remember that EBCOG's aim is to improve the health of women and their babies by seeking to achieve the highest possible standards of training and care in the field of obstetrics and gynaecology in all European countries. If there is anything that EBCOG can appropriately do to support the attainment of this goal at national level, then we are happy to help.

EBCOG is currently in the process of reviewing and developing its strategy and infrastructure and, following consultations with Council, is considering i) introducing a system whereby the Office of Vice-President is replaced by that of President-Elect; ii) whether an Office of Past-President should be created and; iii) if the mandate periods of these Offices should each be for a two-year period. At our meeting in Antwerp, it was clear that that it would be important to determine the responsibilities of these posts, should they be introduced, and to ensure that each Officer has a clear and well defined role. Council agreed that for future elections, all candidates should be asked to provide a brief CV and 'manifesto' to provide more background information before the vote by Council delegates.

Speaking of elections brings me nicely onto the fact that Prof Juha Mäkinen from Finland was elected as an Executive member by Council. My congratulations to Juha, and my commiserations to the other candidates. It is always extremely encouraging and heartening to see how many people are prepared to stand for election and volunteer to offer their time, expertise and commitment to EBCOG and to European obstetrics and gynaecology.

One of EBCOG's driving forces is our Standing Committee on Training and Assessment (SCTA), chaired by Prof Klaus Vetter. At our recent Council meeting, this committee was asked to update EBCOG's specialist training curriculum and log book and, together with the four subspecialist societies, the subspecialist training programmes and log books, with particular reference to the requirements of the European Working Time Directive (EWTD). The SCTA is also expanding the Training the Trainers' courses and the intention is that such courses become a requirement of EBCOG's Hospital Visiting and Accreditation system. Again, in the light of the EWTD, such courses are becoming increasingly relevant, as to get the best from trainees within the EWTD, limits good and efficient training is ever-more essential. My thanks to Klaus and the other members of the SCTA for all their efforts on our behalf.

EBCOG's visiting system continues to go from strength to strength and I am delighted how influential it has been in helping to establish many national visiting systems in countries where such systems did not previously exist. After the recent series of visits, EBCOG has now accredited 85 departments across Europe. This is quite some achievement and so many congratulations to EBCOG's hardworking Coordinator of Visiting and Accreditation, Prof Juriy Wladimiroff.

In addition to supporting the development of best practice and quality assessment at national level, EBCOG also acts as the voice of European obstetricians and gynaecologists in relation to the European Institutions, both directly and via UEMS. In autumn this year, representatives of EBCOG will meet in Brussels with MEPs. This is a preliminary meeting and we hope that through this initiative, we can consolidate our relationship with representatives of the European Institutions. The preliminary topics proposed for discussion at this meeting are standards of care; reproductive tourism; the role of midwives; the increase in C/Sections and the EWTD and its effects.

EBCOG's close relationship with its subspecialist sisters was further cemented in the Antwerp Council when the subspecialist societies gained the right to vote within EBCOG. Subspecialist visiting is continuing and is developing well. As you know, subspecialist departments must first be accredited for basic training and to speed up this process a list of all the centres accredited for basic training will be available on our 'new look' website. The new site is a work in progress which we hope will 'go live' before the autumn. Thanks to the efforts of our webmaster, Dr Erica Werner and Mr Jappe Dekker, the web designer, this site should be much more interactive and dynamic, and we would really welcome all your ideas for making the site as useful a resource as possible.

Of course, developing a web site costs money and, thanks to the Treasurer, Prof Wolfgang Holzgreve, EBCOG's finances are in good shape. Indeed, at the Council meeting in Antwerp, delegates discussed how some of EBCOG's assets might be used to fund various activities such as visits or exchanges for trainees and possibly specialists. Council members agreed to submit ideas for discussion in writing prior to its next meeting in November.

Trainees are clearly the future of the specialty and EBCOG is committed to supporting ENTOG. At its Council meeting on Thursday 6th May, ENTOG elected a new Executive Committee:

- President: Dr Nuno Martins
- Secretary-General: Dr Pille Pärgrmäe
- Treasurer: Dr Mikulas Redecha
- Elected Members: Dr Elena Pavlova and Dr Karen Rose.

ENTOG currently represents approximately 6500 European trainees and 120 trainees attended the ENTOG Council meeting in Antwerp. In addition, 40 trainees took part in the Exchange Programme. ENTOG's next Exchange Programme and meeting will be held in London on 6th & 7th May 2011 and so, as we agreed in the past, the EBCOG Council meeting will take place in London at the same time. I know how much ENTOG values EBCOG's support, and so I would urge as many national delegates as possible to try and attend the ENTOG Council meeting in addition to the EBCOG Council meeting. Finally, many congratulations to ENTOG and the ENTOG President, Dr Nuno Martins on ENTOG's admirable progress.

Moving from a European to a more global perspective, you know from recent minutes and Newsletters that EBCOG has initiated a dialogue with FIGO about regional representation within FIGO. To recap briefly, EBCOG's concern is that the number of countries in each of FIGO's five regions varies enormously. Europe contains 41 of FIGO's members, and is in fact the largest region, followed by Asia-Oceania and Africa, which both have approximately 30 member societies, and then by Latin America, which has around 20 member societies. Finally, the North American region is comprised of three countries (Canada, Mexico and the USA).

As you know, I have written to the President of FIGO about this matter and he has kindly replied to say that he understood EBCOG's concerns. With the agreement of the Executive, I also contacted the President of AOFOG to ask him for his perspective on the situation. Council discussed this question again in Antwerp and agreed that EBCOG take the following motion to FIGO at its next Executive Meeting in June 2010:

"EBCOG suggests that, given the current imbalance in regional representation within FIGO, FIGO should amend its constitution to allow regions incorporating more than 10 countries to have up to three representatives on the FIGO Executive Board."

I hope to be able to report back with more news following this meeting.

Finally, in May this year Prof William Dunlop's term of office as President of the UEMS Section of O & G came to an end and, with Council's assent, I took on the post of Section President. I would like to thank Bill enormously for all his valuable contributions to EBCOG over the last 14 years, as a national delegate, as Treasurer for two terms, as President of EBCOG and as President of the UEMS Section of O & G – Bill, we will miss you.

In the past it has been usual for the President of EBCOG and the President of the Section to be one and the same person and our intention is to amend the EBCOG Constitution so that

the President of EBCOG is also the President of the Section during the period of his/her Presidency of EBCOG. I will be writing to Council members about this shortly, as required by the Constitution.

It only leaves me to say that I wish you all a happy, healthy and fruitful summer. Do keep in touch, as your ideas and input on all aspects of EBCOG's activities are invaluable, as mutual cooperation and communication are the beating heart of EBCOG.



Prof Peter Hornnes
President EBCOG & UEMS Section O & G