

## 14th EAHP Congress in Barcelona: IT and automation - tools for better care

This year's pharmaceutical fiesta was on the largest scale ever in terms of attendees and participating countries, and promises to go from strength to strength next year. Congratulations to our award-winning president and everyone who contributed.

The opening ceremony began with a brief welcome and introduction by Dr Roberto Frontini, the congress Chairman, who was delighted by the record number of delegates, over 2,600 from 51 countries! Everyone was then warmly welcomed to Barcelona by the Director General of Health Services for the Catalan Government. Using the theme of the congress in his address he recognised the need to further develop tools for the hospital pharmacist in order to help hospital pharmacists in their role developing the therapeutic portfolio. All of us have access to new drug designs with new individual therapies with the hospital pharmacist having an important responsibility. Automation is essential to help reduce prescribing errors and complexity, and as well as increasing safety, it can also save time. Technology is thus becoming a key point in the sustainability and quality of public finance health care. Therefore, it is important that in this global world the profession not only generates but shares their knowledge. He hoped that as well as taking the opportunity to do this at the congress the delegates would also take time to visit Barcelona, Catalonia and Spain. Mrs Rosario Santolaya, the Vice President of the Spanish Society of Hospital Pharmacy (SEFH), went on to emphasise that pharmacy is not a "static" profession and that the scientific programme of the congress, as always, reflects what is actually happening in hospital pharmacy. However, the aim is always the same: better care for patients!

Mrs Jacqueline Surugue, President of EAHP, then gave her opening address wearing the ASHP's Donald E Francke medal that she had been awarded in December 2008. In her usual modest and understated manner Mrs Surugue said

although it was in her name, the medal was an honour for the EAHP. There were also some other special facts which she wanted to highlight this year. The 14th EAHP Congress in Barcelona had not only attracted a record number of participants, with the largest number of exhibitors, it had been completely organised by the association itself! Congratulations to everyone involved, a congress for hospital pharmacists organised by, essentially, hospital pharmacists!

Congratulations were also in order for the official journal of the association, the *European Journal of Hospital Pharmacy Practice*, which starting from 2008, Volume 14, Issue 1, has been indexed and abstracted in the following:

- Science Citation Index Expanded (also known as SciSearch®)
- Journal Citation Reports/Science Edition.

As Mrs Surugue said, "This propels the *EJHP Practice* into the world of scientific journals." This is due not only to the years of hard work and dedication from the Editor-in-Chief, Professor Arnold G Vulto, and the editorial team, but also to members of the association for submitting work and papers of a high standard. She believes *EJHP Practice* has a brilliant future and continues to offer a unique communication and continuing education medium for all European hospital pharmacists.

As always EAHP is busy with ongoing projects, such as working with the Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise (IHE), which tries to improve the way computer systems in health care share information. EAHP is sought for advice and listened to at EU level and is continuously striving for recognition of the hospital pharmacy profession. Most EAHP

members are not fortunate enough to be able to attend the congress; therefore, we finished with a glimpse into the future: a short video using Second Life to show the potential of the interactive online system for education and the sharing of knowledge. The congress was then officially opened to the sound of male Catalan singers playing guitars and dressed in regional costumes.

The congress venue itself was pleasant and appropriate as usual, and the staff were friendly and helpful. The exhibition was spread over 3,200 square metres, on two floors, and this gave enough room for everyone to look round in comfort during breaks. There was a good selection of drinks and food. A change this year was to start in the morning of the first day, with the opening ceremony at 09:30. Most people managed to arrive the night before in order to get to this, although they may not have made it to the start of the Spanish Showcase at 08:00. If you missed it, the Spain Country Focus from *EJHP Practice*, 2009, Issue 2 reports the activities of the Spanish Society of Hospital Pharmacy (SEFH) as well as the Information Technology used in Spanish hospitals. This was again elegantly covered by Dr Ana Herranz in the first keynote presentation of the congress. The new start time enabled the reception to end at 19:30, so attendees were able to have dinner earlier and start the second day fresher than in previous years.

As Mrs Jacqueline Surugue prepares to step down, the *EJHP* took the opportunity to interview Dr Roberto Frontini. He is looking forward to taking over as President in the General Assembly in June 2009 and seemed to enjoy the congress greatly. Mrs Surugue will continue her active involvement, keeping her seat on the board as immediate past president.

The president-elect was positive in his comments about the congress and the solid financial status of the EAHP. "We have a successful relationship with the pharmaceutical industry, which is based on the professional profiling of the EAHP from Brussels, Belgium. In addition we have an attractive location, an interesting programme and a good choice of industry seminars, not to mention a track record of successful congresses in the past." This translated into increased support for the congress, in particular with more pharmacists able to attend this year.

Amgen and Bayer HealthCare were the main sponsors this year. Without sponsors, the congress - indeed, the EAHP - could not function, so many thanks are always in order. As well as the exhibition, seven industry-sponsored seminars contributed to the learning possibilities, such as that hosted by Hospira. The use of biopharmaceuticals and biosimilars is on the increase, and, as with the introduction of every new drug to the formulary, a degree of uncertainty accompanies their incorporation. This particular symposium highlighted the use of a systematic checklist (*Points to consider in the evaluation of biopharmaceuticals*, Eur J Hosp Pharm Prac. 2008;14(1):75-6) which can guide and support hospital pharmacists in their assessment of biopharmaceuticals.

For the first time this year, electronic badge scanning operated at seminars. Attendance was recorded and ACPE continuing education certificates can be obtained by entering your badge number

or user name and password used during registration, on the EAHP website or request a new password. Many people are downloading their certificates.

The EAHP regrets that some of the congress attendees were robbed while in Barcelona (mostly in the metro) and that one exhibitor had his booth display blocked in Leipzig, Germany, on its way to Spain, which left him with a minimalistic stand for a day. He nevertheless maintained a positive attitude and made the most of the exhibition, given the circumstances! Despite this unpleasantness, Barcelona is a wonderful place and everyone enjoyed the playful atmosphere and architecture epitomised by the Gaudi lizard congress logo - not to mention the sunshine.

The poster exhibition was the largest ever, with 215 posters, up 50% on last year. Well done! As usual, some authors have been invited to submit their paper for publication in *EJHP Science*. If you feel your poster could be written up in this way, please contact the Editor-in-Chief of *EJHP Science*, Professor Per Hartvig. The first prize winner this year was Professor Ludo Willems and his group from Belgium, with "Vancomycin in continuous vs. intermittent infusion: a retrospective evaluation" from category B: clinical pharmacy. This study came out with a practical, useful conclusion: vancomycin administration via CI is comparable to intermittent infusion but adequate loading must be ensured to avoid subtherapeutic levels on day two. Perhaps due to the congress being held in Spain, an astonishing

134 abstracts were received from Spain. But the spread as well as the quality and number of papers is increasing, 2009 seeing papers from eastern Europe, Brazil, USA, a joint study between Canada, Denmark, Germany, Sweden and UK and a pharmacoeconomics study by an Iranian doing a PhD in Malaysia.

The closing ceremony was the setting for presentation of prizes and farewells. The prize for the best paper presented by a student was this year awarded to Joano Moutinho Pinto, Portugal, for his paper "Sequential therapy and economic impact evaluation". This year the congress bade farewell to Mr Robert McArtney, UK, who stepped down after nine years on the Scientific Committee. Mrs Jacqueline Surugue also specially thanked the team from EAHP headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. Multinational and multilingual, this group clearly works well together and the calm, professional organisation of the congress, not to mention the use of the new website, were clearly visible. So mark next year's congress date in your 2010 diary: 24-26 March.

And so to the future. Next year, for the 15th congress, the EAHP will join forces with the ESCP, the European Society of Clinical Pharmacists. It seems totally logical for these two organisations to support one another, and the congress will expand. Fifteen seminars will be presented on the theme "Focus on pharmacotherapy - hospital pharmacy advancing patient care". The venue: Nice, in the south of France. Santé!

