

The European Stroke Organisation (ESO) Stroke Summer School 2009 in Lille.

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Context

The first « EUSI » Summer School has been initiated in 1997 by Professor Kjell Asplund in Umea, Sweden. It has been organised every year since then in different cities throughout Europe. We had the privilege to organise the last one - which is now the « ESO » summer school - in Lille, from August 31st to September 4th, 2009, with the valuable contribution of Romeo Cecchelli (laboratory of pathophysiology of the blood brain barrier), Hilde Hénon (Department of neurology, stroke unit), Xavier Leclerc (Department of neuroradiology), Jean-Paul Lejeune (Department of neurosurgery), Florence Pasquier (Department of neurology, memory centre) and Régis Bordet (Department of pharmacology).

Objectives

The main objective of the summer school is to provide an overview on stroke and cerebrovascular disorders, during a one-week-course to young physicians who have a special interest in this field. The ESO Stroke Summer School is one of the main educational programmes in Europe in the stroke field, beside the *European Stroke Conference*¹, the *European Stroke Master Programme*² and the *ESO Virtual Stroke University*.³ The entire programme of the 2009 summer school is detailed at <http://www.eso-lille2009.eu>

Another objective of the ESO Stroke Summer School is to help attendees to know each other, and to create a network that may be useful in future research and teaching activities in the stroke field.

General rules

The general rule is that the travel between their country and the summer school is at the charge of the attendees or of their institutions, but the local organisation takes in charge all expenses occurring between their arrival and their departure (accommodation, local transportation, lunches, coffee breaks, and 3 of the 6 dinners). Only the ESC poster price winners will be reimbursed for their travel expenses, by the ESC.

Speakers are selected on the basis of their expertise in the field and are divided into 3 categories : local speakers (i.e. from Lille, Belgium, Amiens and Paris), ESO Executive committee members, and other speakers coming from European Academic institutions known for their expertise in stroke.

Participants

The ESO Stroke Summer School was announced on the website of the ESO⁴, in *Cerebrovascular Diseases*, and details on how to apply were provided on the local website⁵. We received 66 applications. All applications were seen by the 2 organisers and at least one other person from the local committee, in order to check whether the conditions were met : being below 40 years of age, no previous participation in a stroke summer school, strength of application (letter of motivation, letter of support, curriculum vitae), expected benefit for the applicant and his/her institution or country, and having a special interest in stroke. We decided to accept a limited number of non European applicants, and also to secure several positions for applicants from the former Soviet Union countries that have not joined the EU. Of the 66 applications received via the website, 47 were considered as valid, and 7 were finally rejected for various reasons, especially country limitations. Forty participants were selected. For the first time 2 winners of the poster price at the ESC were also selected and joined the 40 selected attendees. Besides, 4 free attendees (not at the charge of the summer school except for lunches and dinners) participated in several sessions of the summer school. They were local residents with a special interest in Stroke, and a Finnish resident who happened to be in Lille at that time. Therefore, the assistance consisted of 42 attendees plus most of the time 4 free attendees, local organisers and speakers of the day. The teacher : attendee ratio was of more than 1:1, which is the objective. A selection of photos during the sessions and social events is presented on the figure.

The 42 selected attendees (22 women and 20 men, median age 31 years) were from 25 countries⁶ : 29 from the EU (Italy 5; Belgium 4; Germany 3; Poland 3; United Kingdom 3; France 2; Romania 2; Spain 2; Austria 1; Netherlands 1; Portugal 1; Slovakia 1; Sweden 1); 7 from European countries not members of the EU (Switzerland 2; Albania 1; Armenia 1; Georgia 1; Moldavia 1; Russia 1) and 6 from non-European countries (Brazil 1; Canada 1; India 1; Indonesia 1; Tunisia 1; Egypt 1).

¹ www.eurostroke.org

² www.donau-uni.ac.at/en/studium/strokemedicine/index.php

³ www.stroke-university.com

⁴ www.eso-stroke.org

⁵ <http://www.eso-lille2009.eu>

⁶ We considered the country of residency, not the country of citizenship : e.g. a Brazilian working in Portugal is considered as Portuguese.

Speakers

Speakers were from Lille (14), France (8); United Kingdom (5); Germany (4); The Netherlands (3); Italy (3); Portugal (3); Switzerland (2); Sweden (1); Austria (1); Finland (1); and Belgium (1). The presentation of cases was made by 5 speakers from Lille and the 6 workshops were presented by colleagues from Lille and Ghent.

All speakers agreed that their presentation was handed out electronically to the participants, sometimes with the exception of 1 or 2 slides when non published data were presented. All materials were made available within speakers and attendees less than 5 days after the event. All lectures, with the exception of case presentations and workshops, have been recorded with the consent of the speakers, and will be made available on the website of the Virtual Stroke University within one month⁷. We strongly encourage those who could not attend the summer school to have a look at the website of the virtual university which is a major activity of the ESO.

Among the speakers, we were honoured to have the participation of several presidents of prestigious scientific societies: Werner Hacke (*European Stroke Organisation*), Bo Norrving (*World Stroke Organisation*), Jose Ferro (*European Neurological Society*), Jacques de Reuck (*European Federation of Neurological Societies*), and Jean-Philippe Neau (*Société Française Neurovasculaire*).

Meeting Programme

The scientific programme is available online (www.eso-lille2009.eu). It covered all relevant aspects of stroke, from basis sciences, to post stroke conditions.

The meeting started on Sunday evening with a welcome ceremony organised by the Mayor of Lille at the Fine Art Museum. Participants and speakers were introduced to each other and, after the welcome addresses of Jacques Richir, representing Mrs Martine Aubry, Mayor of Lille, and of Jean-Paul Francke, Dean of the medical faculty, we had a wonderful lecture from Stephen Meairs (Mannheim) on EUSTROKE, a Stroke Research Initiative of the European Union.

Social Programme

The 3 dinners organised for attendees were an excellent occasion to mix attendees and speakers in a convivial atmosphere. On Monday the dinner was organised in an excellent restaurant located in the old part of the city. On Wednesday, the dinner was organised outside the city, in a wonderful place located at 10km from Lille. It gave the opportunity for welcome addresses from the organisers (Didier Leys), the Chairman of the ESO (Werner Hacke), the local member of the parliament (Sebastien Huyghe), and of two attendees (Ron Liebkind, from Helsinki, and Jacek Staszewski from Warsaw where the next summer school will be organised). We had also wonderful teaching course of "Ch'ti" - the local language - by Christian Lucas. On Thursday, after this initiation to the language, the dinner was organised in a typical "Ch'ti" restaurant, with the classical "*vlaamse stoofpot met frieten en bier voor alle*" which was not (as we expected) a great moment of French cuisine, but a great moment of friendliness between the participants. It was also an excellent occasion to enjoy the wonderful voices of our colleagues from Sweden, Finland, Tunisia and Egypt.

Evaluation

The organisers were impressed by the knowledge and enthusiasm of the attendees.

The participants were asked to answer anonymously a questionnaire to evaluate the scientific content and the organisation of the summer school. The questionnaire consisted in a structured evaluation of different domains including the overall programme, the specific programme and arrangements. The questionnaire was returned by 39 attendees out of 42 (free attendees were not asked to answer). At the question "do you agree with the fact that you learnt something new which is useful for your practice?", more than 90 % of attendees answered "I completely agree" and the other answered "I almost agree". At the question "did the programme cover current and relevant topics" more than 80% answered "I completely agree" and the other "I almost agree". Concerning specific parts of the programme, they were asked to classify half-day sessions as excellent, good, bad and very bad. All sessions were classified as excellent or good by more than 70% of participants (up to 100% for Wednesday morning), with a special high rate of "excellent" for acute ischaemic stroke management, intra-cerebral haemorrhage, rare causes of cerebral ischaemia and the 5 evening lectures (ranked as a whole). The workshops and the basic science session were less appreciated, but for both the proportion of participants who considered that it was excellent or good was of 70%.

The non-structured part of the evaluation is more difficult to evaluate, but at the questions "what did you like more", "what did you like less" and "what do you suggest for the future" several answers came more than 5 times and did therefore reflect an opinion that should be taken into account for the future:

What they liked more were the excellent general atmosphere, good lectures, excellent programme, the workshop on rehabilitation, having personal contacts with the experts, the 5 evening lectures, having mixed attendees and speakers during dinners, and the organisation described as "sometimes military ... but absolutely perfect".

⁷ www.stroke-university.com

What they liked less were the accommodation judged as suboptimal, the density of the programme, the absence of a session on TIA, the workshops (described as too short and too far from the meeting), the small number of practical cases, and more "local" issues such as having coffee breaks without tea, absence of air conditioning and ... hearing Dr Lucas singing during the Thursday dinner.

Attendees' recommendations for future summer schools are to keep the same general organisation but to stop at 5 pm, to organise sport activities, to have one afternoon free (preferably on Wednesday) but work on Saturday morning, and to include talks on basic sciences and imaging in the relevant sessions instead of being in specific sessions. The attendees enjoyed the dinners and strongly recommend to organise 3 or 4 dinners, but to leave them free for 1 or 2 evenings.

Impact for patients

The Stroke Summer School gave the opportunity to have articles in regional newspapers⁸ ⁹ and TV channels¹⁰, and to schedule a more extensive report on the regional TV channel to be released for the next World Stroke Day, on October 29th. These relations with journals and TV were organised together with the association of patients and the emergency regulation service. They should increase the knowledge on stroke symptoms at the community level, and make more people call "number 15" when facing someone with symptoms of stroke.

Future ESO Summer Schools:

The next summer school will be organised Anna Czlonkowska and Maciej Niewada. It will be held in 2010 in Warsaw, Poland. We will be pleased to give them any advice they may need, as Patrik Michel did with us last year.

Acknowledgements

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⁸ La Voix du Nord, Sept 1st, 2009.

⁹ Nord Eclair, Sept. 7th, 2009

¹⁰ FR3