

Report of the activities 2013

The third meeting of the Working Group (WG) "Pathologists in favour of developing countries" is about to be held, and it will take place during the 25th ECP in Lisbon, in September 2013. This working group was born just three years ago, during the 22nd ECP in Krakow, Poland, with the aim of bringing together pathologists from different parts of the world to improve pathology service in developing countries. So far, twinning between institutions is likely to contribute to both immediate and lasting improvements in diagnostic accuracy and training through capacity building, consultations and both direct and indirect technology transfer. To provide a constant and continuous education, this WG is actively working to organise meetings each year during the ECP conference, to be constantly up-to-date.

The first session organized by the WG took place in Helsinki, during the 23rd ECP congress in 2011. This first meeting brought together pathologists belonging to the Italian NGO 'Patologi oltre frontiera' (Pathologists beyond borders) who shared experiences and information about the state of the art of the many ongoing projects organized and coordinated by this NGO in different developing countries, mainly located in the African regions. Participants of this small meeting felt as being at a "family reunion" where everybody shared ideas on how to improve services and give visibility to the different projects, with the aim of enrolling more and more volunteer pathologists. During this session, it was decided to establish a website to keep people updated and to try to 'attract' pathologists from all over the world.

Thanks to the efforts and the enthusiasm of the people involved, the second meeting of this WG, held during the 24th ECP of Prague last year, succeeded in hosting speakers from different backgrounds and countries across the globe who shared their personal and professional experiences of facing infrastructural and economic limitations. After a brief introduction of the President of the WG, Dr. Davide Soldini from Switzerland, the session started with the amazing contribution of Prof. Anita Borges, from India, who spoke on "Pathologists between high needs and low resources – The Asian experience". In particular, she highlighted the differences existing within India itself, where excellence referral centres co-exist with very poor health conditions. She stressed the concept that a better living and health condition would improve quality of life and at the same time reduce the incidence of many diseases. She impressed the audience with the heartfelt invitation of finding the way to connect the 'two Indias'. The session continued with the outstanding contribution of Prof. Naresh Kikkeri, from Imperial College London, UK, who

discussed "Classifying B-cell lymphomas with five antibodies: An algorithm", a scoring system based on five immunostains that would permit distinction among high-grade lymphomas. The interesting algorithm represents an appropriate approach for improving diagnosis in developing countries, as it could be applicable in countries with limited resources. The session then ended with contributions illustrating the activities of two NGOs, the Italian 'Patologi oltre Frontiera', and the International Network for Cancer Treatment and Research (INCTR, Belgium). The former was represented by Dr. Stefano Guzzetti, Italy, who spoke about 'Cooperation through satellite: A digital network for African pathologists', and illustrated the advantages of using telepathology. This approach can be an easy and relatively inexpensive tool in linking pathologists in different continents, thereby providing additional capacity for consultation and further technical improvements in low-resource settings. The last talk was presented by Prof. Lorenzo Leoncini, Italy, who illustrated the several activities coordinated by The International Network for Cancer Treatment and Research (INCTR) in developing countries. In particular, the talk pointed at the importance of carrying out research projects also in developing countries, as they may serve to improve diagnosis and to identify useful markers for therapies adapted to low-income countries.

After the first two editions, it was felt that the goal of this WG - to share the experience of pathologists from different backgrounds and different sites across the globe - was successfully met. Furthermore, this meeting provided an excellent opportunity to plan future clinical and research studies through collaboration between the more and less developed countries. With scientific resources many challenges have won, and there is a dense network of cooperation among different countries, working together.

*Giulia De Falco,
Secretary of the WG*