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The European Society of Pathology in Motion

Historical perspective

In the early 1960's pathologists in Europe started to realise that more structured exchange and a common approach to continuous medical education would favour the development of the discipline. A group of friends, one might call them the 'Founding Fathers', got together on the initiative of prof.A.Giordano with enthusiastic support from prof.P.Dustin on November 7, 1964 in Salzburg, and founded what we now know as the 'European Society of Pathology' (ESP).

Since its creation, the ESP has organized 21 biennial congresses with high level scientific programmes in major cities all over Europe. Realizing that the discipline was undergoing rapid development, in the late 20th century it was felt that more frequent meetings were called for and Intercontinental Congresses and Intercongress Meetings were created (the Intercontinental Congresses in 2000, 2004 and 2008; the Intercongress Meetings in 2002 and 2006).

In the late 1980's it was felt that the congresses, however successful, provided insufficient opportunity for pathology trainees to meet and to profit from direct didactic encounters with renowned European pathologists. It was felt that small scale courses might be the best way to achieve this goal. This led to the creation of EuroCellPath in 1989, focusing on 'mechanisms of disease' and in 1991 of the European School of Pathology (ESCoP) focusing on diagnostic pathology.

However dynamic and influential the ESP came to be, in several fields of development of the discipline the ESP deployed little effort.

Policy making in medical practice in Europe was never a strong focus of the ESP and neither were initiatives undertaken to contribute to the harmonization of postgraduate education in pathology in Europe. Two reasons can be considered as important causes for the relative invisibility of the ESP in these domains. First of all, each country in Europe has its own Society of Pathology. Many even have more than one, with quite a few countries having their national division of the IAP. As medical practice is primarily the responsibility of the individual countries, national societies have remained a dominant force but, almost without exception, without a real European policy. The second reason is that the ESP remained until recently an organization of 'amateurs': highly trained, skilled and enthusiastic professionals but with too little time to dedicate to professional policy and without professional management support.

Reshaping the Society

Against this background it is not surprising that the executive committee, a 12 member governing body, the membership, of which reflects the major regions of Europe and elected by the members, and the advisory committee, composed of representatives of the EU countries and delegated by their national society, felt that it was time to rethink the structures the 'founding fathers' had conceived. The executive committee met with a group of advisors in 2005 in Istanbul and a programme of action was decided upon. The following mission statement was formulated as a starting point:

The European Society of Pathology is a leading force in Pathology in Europe and as such a determining factor in the future of our specialty in Europe and beyond. The ESP has, as a scientific society, as its primary aim to promote high quality diagnostic practice, applied and translational research and under- and postgraduate education in the field of human pathology. The ESP positions itself as an organisation networking between national pathology societies in Europe, linking with EU bodies in close coordination with UEMS (Union Européenne des Médecins Spécialistes) Pathology and EAPCP (European Association of Pathology Chairs and Program Directors).The ESP intends to do this through :

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The European Society of Pathology in Motion

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- Annual European congresses of Pathology with a strong accent on didactic content (short courses, slide seminars) but with a sound scientific basis (symposia)
- ESP courses through EscoP, which will be primarily in a small group interactive format - practice oriented, but anticipating routine use of new technology in a diagnostic setting, which implies updates on molecular and cell pathology
- Accrediting and advertising courses organised by national societies
- Interfacing with CME granting bodies of the European national certification boards and UEMS
- Providing the infrastructure for quality assurance in new diagnostic fields, notably molecular pathology.

A first step was a new website. Sure, as much of the evolving ESP, this site is still under (interactive) construction and in the months to come a variety of new elements will be added. Then there is the issue of professional administrative support. With new income from a mutually profitable relationship with the publisher of *Virchows Archiv*, our official journal, our financial basis is sound. ESP has found an attractive site in Brussels where a manager will set up an office to support administration and organisation of our activities. Small meetings can also be held in the office. The organisation of annual congresses will need competent support. ESP has contracted one of the leading European Professional Congress Organisers to support this important activity on a long term basis. Officers and executive committee need to interact more with ESP members. A new Education Committee will start planning exciting new ESP courses but also will accredit and promote quality courses organised by national societies in Europe.

Further outlook

Does this sound ambitious? It probably does, but then who would appreciate a Society without ambition? Can we do this? Yes we can. We have to because the future of our discipline is at stake. With recruitment lagging behind and falling short of present needs, the increasing complexity of diagnostic pathology in the era of molecular medicine and the spectacular development of our understanding of disease mechanisms there is enough to motivate young physicians to take up this challenge. Can we do it alone? Certainly not. We will need close links with national societies, with EU structures such as the UEMS Board of Pathology, with academic leaders brought together in the EAPCP. Together we can create a European identity for pathology.

Prof. Fred Bosman, The ESP President

Important News : ESP QA Program

KRAS TESTING FOR COLORECTAL CANCER

Dear member,

- Recent developments have led to the recognition that KRAS testing on tumor tissue is required for colorectal cancer patients who are eligible for EGFR blocking therapy. Therefore the European Society of Pathology has decided to start a helpdesk and a quality assurance program for KRAS testing in colorectal cancer. A joint committee of the Working Groups for molecular pathology and diseases of the gastrointestinal tract has prepared a manuscript on this topic, which is already published in *Virchows Archiv*, and the abstract of which you will find below. The ESP aims to have the helpdesk running on our website, and expects to have the quality assurance program in place by the end of the year. In the meantime, please feel free to ask any question by e-mailing the ESP.
- Novel therapeutic agents targeting the epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) have improved outcomes for patients with colorectal carcinoma. However, these therapies are effective only in a subset of patients. Activating mutations in the *KRAS* gene are found in 30-40% of colorectal tumors and are associated with poor response to anti-EGFR therapies. Thus, *KRAS* mutation status can predict which patient may or may not benefit from anti-EGFR therapy. Although many diagnostic tools have been developed for *KRAS* mutation analysis, validated methods and standardized testing procedures are lacking. This poses a challenge for the optimal use of anti-EGFR therapies in the management of colorectal carcinoma. Here we review the molecular basis of EGFR-targeted therapies and the resistance to treatment conferred by *KRAS* mutations. We also present guideline recommendations and a proposal for a European quality assurance program to help ensure accuracy and proficiency in *KRAS* mutation testing across the European Union.

Prof. Han Van Krieken, The ESP Treasurer



Prof. Agnantis on the right:



Important Information:

IOANNINA UNIVERSITY COURSES IN PATHOLOGY (IUCP)

In the Institute of Ioannina University, Medical School of Greece we offer courses for continuing Pathology education; the IOANNINA UNIVERSITY COURSES IN PATHOLOGY (IUCP).

These are postgraduate courses on selected topics of Human Pathology and have been offered since 1996, after the unanimous decision of the Executive Committee (Brussels, June 1995) of the European Society of Pathology, to put the organization of the IUCP under the auspices of the ESP, within the frame of the European Institute for Continuing Medical Education (EICME).

The aim of the Courses is to bring together young Pathologists or 4th and 5th year residents with Tutors, experts in the various fields of Pathology and to encourage active participation of all colleagues during the discussions following the lectures and the slide seminars, providing an in-depth review of Diagnostic Surgical Pathology.

Emphasis is placed on morphological features, newly recognized entities and modern laboratory techniques. A limited number of didactic lectures, given by established and distinguished investigators, cover each topic theoretically.

After the experience gained from the first course (May 1996), a number of distinguished Clinicians were gradually incorporated in the list of invited speakers. A tradition has been established, where the Opening Lecture is offered by a distinguished Specialist Clinician on the subject.

The Opening Lecture has always been dealing with "The challenge for cooperation with the Pathologist".

Furthermore, lectures regarding imaging and therapeutic approaches (chemotherapy, radiotherapy, surgery) are also offered by specialized Clinicians distinguished in the field, providing a holistic approach to each topic. Each course has been designed for 30-35 Pathologists and Clinical Colleagues related to the subject. Over the years, besides the Greek students we also had Participants from: Cyprus, Balkan Countries, Hungary, Czech Republic, Russia, Georgia, Italy and Spain, who accounted for approximately 25% of the student body.

A brief curriculum vitae stating particular experience or interest in the topic of the Course is always required for the preparation of the final list of Tutors and Participants, and for the archives of the Institute.

The vital participation of Tutors and Students, along with the experience that we had gained during these last years, encouraged us to continue this task with a Second Series of Courses. During my long career in organizing the IUCP, I have faced several challenges and I have learned a lot from hands-on experience:

- For a successful organization the active involvement of a University Medical School and of the local authorities is necessary
- The University usually provides the facilities for the materialization of the Course, or participates by other means
- The local authorities, particularly in small towns like Ioannina, play an important role since they cover part of the social events and aid in publicizing the Course in the local media
- For a successful Course publicity should also be provided by the official Societies of Pathology (Hellenic and European Society of Pathology)
- Furthermore, personal communication with the directors of large National and International Hospitals is always helpful
- For this reason an attractive poster is always circulated through e-mail with all the available information
- Participation is always encouraged if the registration fees are the lowest possible
- This cannot be achieved without sponsorship by the Societies of Pathology, the University and local authorities
- Since the aim of the Course is educational we always encourage the participation of residents and young Pathologists from our neighbouring Balkan countries, by waiving their registration fee
- We believe that with the organization of the IUCP our Institution, along with ESCOP and Euro Cell Path, has significantly contributed to the field of Continuing Medical Education in Europe.

Prof. Niki Agnantis, the ESP Past President

Prof. Dr. Jerzy Stachura (1937-2008)

Obituary



prof. J. Stachura
(1937-2008)

It is with great sadness that I have to report the death on 12th September from hepatocellular carcinoma of Jerzy Stachura, who was well known to many members of the European Society of Pathology.

I first met Jerzy when we were both elected to the ESP Executive Committee in 1997. His was always a friendly and welcoming face and he contributed greatly to the Committee in those years. Since then he had become involved in the European School of Pathology; he ran in Kraków several of the courses previously given in Turin. He did this very efficiently and successfully with large numbers of students from Poland and neighbouring countries. Recently, Kraków was chosen by the ESP to host the 2010 Intercongress Meeting and I am sure that he has laid the groundwork for a successful meeting.

Jerzy was born in Horochów, then in Eastern Poland (now in the Ukraine) in 1937. After the Soviet invasion in 1939, his family, who were teachers, escaped westwards to German occupied Poland. He was brought up in Mielec; his parents were members of the underground Polish Home Army whose task it was to teach children in the college programme, an activity punishable by death during the occupation. Shortly before the end of the war, this activity was discovered, but a member of the local German administration friendly to Poles gave a warning that allowed the family to escape into the forests.

Whilst a young child, Jerzy sustained an eye injury leading to a cataract and loss of sight in one eye. He could not be properly treated until after the war, when the cataract and lens were removed. Despite this, he went on to become one of the best specialists in research and diagnostics in pathomorphology in Poland.

After the war, Jerzy's parents were able to resume teaching at the Mielec College, but the new communist authorities persecuted former members of the Home Army. In 1947, even low ranking members began to be subject to arrest, so the family escaped again to Krzeszowice, a town close to Krakow, where they were able to resume a life approaching normality, teaching at colleges in Krzeszowice, and later in Krakow.

Jerzy attended primary school in Mielec and later in Krzeszowice. After this he attended Krzeszowice College graduating summa cum laude in 1954. He then decided to study medicine in Krakow.

He qualified MD, and soon afterwards decided to specialize in pathology; he did his postgraduate training at Krakow. During this time he spent a year as a British Council scholar 1968-69 in the Dept of Histochemistry under Prof. AGE Pearse at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School (Hammersmith Hospital) in the University of London. He was also a visiting professor in the USA from 1979 to 1989 in Columbia University, Missouri and the University of California at Irvine.

Drawing on his experience particularly in London, he became one of the pioneers of immunohistochemistry in Poland. His other areas of interest were gastrointestinal (GI) pathology, especially cytoprotection of the GI tract mucous membranes and molecular pathology of the GI tract, and haematopathology. He was one of the founders of the Polish National Programme for Lymphoma Detection and Diagnosis. He published over 410 papers on various aspects of basic and applied pathology, surgical pathology, electron microscopy, immunohistochemistry and molecular pathology.

His career had previously been impeded by his refusal to join the Communist Party, but in 1991 it was possible for him to be appointed to the chair and Head of the Department of Experimental and Clinical Pathomorphology, at Jagiellonian University in Kraków, where he held the position of Dean of the Medical Faculty from 2002 to 2005. During his distinguished career, he held many other appointments, including Secretary of the Medical Faculty of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and President of the Polish Society of Pathologists from 1998 to 2004.

He was Editor in Chief of the Polish Journal of Pathology and *Folia Medica Cracoviensia*, as well as being a member of the Editorial Board of several journals, including *Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology*, and *Experimental and Clinical Gastroenterology*.

He will be fondly remembered by colleagues in Krakow as a demanding but understanding boss. He will be much missed by all pathologists in Poland and throughout Europe, as is testified by the many expressions of condolence I have received from distinguished pathologists from all over the continent.

He had a few outside interests and was particularly fond of swimming and gardening.

He is survived by his wife, Maria and two children, a son who is a doctor and a daughter who is a lawyer.

Dr. Roderick Simpson, the ESP Secretary



Urbain and Christine van Haelst in May 2001, on the Douro (Portugal) relaxing after a meeting of the ESP Executive Committee, organized by professor Manuel Sobrinho Simoes.

The Pathologist

Interview with prof. Urbain van Haelst, past Treasurer of ESP

In this column, we plan to interview "special" ESP members. Pathologists, young or old, who have something interesting to say, at least in the mind of the interviewer.....

Emeritus Professor Dr. Urbain van Haelst is our first "Pathologist". To most of us, he is known as "The Treasurer": together with his wife, Christine Champagne (isn't this a wonderful name?), Urbain took care of the ESP finances and blue book for many years.

Urbain van Haelst was born in Belgium and studied medicine at the University of Louvain, Belgium from 1951 to 1957. He trained in the department of pathology of the St. Radboud Hospital, University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands, where his academic career spanned 42 years. After receiving a Ph. D. degree in 1967 for experimental studies on the thymus, with the then rather new technique of electron microscopy, he became a visiting assistant Professor at the department of electronmicroscopy, Columbia University (Dr. S. Luse), the department of soft tissue tumors of the AFIP (with Dr. F. Enzinger and Dr. S. Weiss), the department of surgical pathology of Presbyterian Hospital in New York (Dr. R. Lattes) and at the department of pathology, North-Western University, Chicago (Dr. H. Battifora). Gastrointestinal, liver, skin, soft tissue and ultrastructural pathology have been his areas of special interest. As an academic pathologist, he took care of the pathological aspects of the doctoral thesis work of 41 colleagues. He served on the editorial boards of *Ultrastructural Pathology*, *Pathology: Research and Practice*, *Virchows Archiv* and the *International Journal of Surgical Pathology*. In 1987 at the Congress in Prague, Professor van Haelst was appointed treasurer-member of the Executive Committee of the Society and carried out this job for 16 years. Urbain's dedication to the society was matched by that of Christine, his wife since 1960, and together they were given the Honorary Membership of the ESP at the 2003 Ljubljana congress.

Urbain retired at the age of 65 in 1998 but remained active for several more years in diagnostic pathology. In 2006, after 48 years, Urbain and Christine moved back to Belgium, where their three daughters and five grandchildren had been living for some years already.

MM: Most of us have a story on why we made our career choice; what made you decide to become a pathologist?

UvH: Fascination caused by the structure of the various types of human cells and tissues under normal or pathological conditions, as seen by light microscopy, has played an important role in my decision to continue in this branch of my studies, I think. To attend each lecture as well as each practical exercise of embryology, histology and pathological anatomy was a must throughout my medical studies. I loved to read about it and to analyse histological and pathological pictures and especially to draw them. I still have my personal drawing books! So, if you want to become a professional in this matter for a lifetime there is only one choice: pathology. Period.

MM: What did you like most about pathology?

UvH: Generally each pathologist must realize that over and over again he can be the (most) important link of the diagnostic chain. Besides valuable information about the prognosis, he contributes indirectly to the optimal treatment of the patient in question. Moreover, pathology is unique because of the central role and the connections with almost any other medical speciality.

MM: I suppose that the day you retired was not a happy one?

UvH: A black day! Luckily I had the opportunity to continue part-time for another three years after my retirement, exclusively doing diagnostic pathology. Nowadays I keep myself informed about the programmes of the meetings of the Belgian and Dutch Pathology Societies, the coming congresses of the ESP (Florence 2009) and the Society for Ultrastructural Pathology. Reading *Virchows Archiv* and abstract books is also part of my filling-in time. On rainy days I cut out appropriate electron- and lightmicroscopic slides to make an artistic composition. On a sunny day it is a colourful "stained-glass" souvenir on the window of my study.

MM: So you did not really say goodbye completely to pathology, but I am sure you must spend some time doing other things; what for instance?

UvH: Unfortunately almost no more race- or mountain biking. My best biking mate passed away and I detest risky biking on my own in Belgium! Instead, I should mention now knocking together things in our new house and the gardening at home and at our summerhouse in the Ardennes which is a time-consuming hobby for a non-expert. More visits to relatives are highly appreciated and stimulated by our children and grandchildren. The perfunctory attendance of the increasing number of funerals presses down liveliness. My thematic (medical) stamp collection should be brought to life but needs help and expertise. A Life Fitness Center is just the fifth house from the corner; and finally, I can assure you that a short voyage or a cruise on the Danube is most rewarding.

MM: Tell me, do you have regrets involving your professional life?

UvH: I sincerely regret the discontinuation of my study on the experimentally induced acute involution and regeneration of the thymus of rats. Many light- and electronmicroscopic findings should have been studied more in depth by sophisticated methods (e.g. immunotechniques, not yet available at that time).

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The Pathologist

Interview with prof. Urbain van Haelst, past Treasurer of ESP

I observed in early 1965 peculiar ultrastructural changes in the nuclei and the cytoplasm of the lymphocytes in the thymic cortex, later on described and known as apoptosis. I think I missed the opportunity to be a co-author of a chapter in a pathology textbook. Regarding benign and malignant soft tumors, I had been in good hands during my internship at the AFIP. I wasted too much time in search of cellular cross-striation in HE sections of a suspected malignant rhabdo tumor, but the numerous management sessions with the same vacuous questions and answers over and over again were much worse.

MM: And what about other emotions in your daily work?

UvH: To recognize in time serious pitfalls before making a definitive diagnosis and discuss and explain the problem to an attentive resident qualify as happy moments in my daily work. Joy, when examining certain types of soft tissue sarcoma and my colleague and I, together at the microscope, made the right diagnosis. But also feelings of astonishment over our ignorance and lack of understanding of the growth pattern, the monstrous polymorphic nuclei, the aggressive way of invasion in the bloodvessels and in the surroundings, etc.

MM: We know how important you have been for the ESP. What has this Society meant for you?

UvH: I still admire and respect the first move and foresight of Prof. P. Dustin and his team to create this Society. I congratulate heartily this Society when reading the list of its efforts and activities up to now. I am proud to be a (honorary) member and to have given valuable and substantial support. Christine and myself carried out the membership administration and treasurership with enthusiasm. Urbanization (a term coined by Prof. G. Klöppel) and christi(a)nization characterized the job.

I always enjoyed both the successful and the less efficacious meetings of the Executive Committee and the hospitality kindly offered by the various hosts. Each congress meant for me a unique occasion to meet motivated pathologists and to be updated.

MM: What do you think about the current course of the ESP to become a more professional organization?

UvH: From the sideline and as far I can remember a few remarks: in general effective and more accurate management e.g. less ad hoc decisions and not endless discussions without cutting the knots. An adequate division of the tasks between the members of the Executive Committee with the obligation to report on the results had to be developed. If needed, one should appeal now to external expertise for difficult or unexpected situations or problems. I presume that with the actual favourable financial position of the Society there is no longer an obstacle. Taking care of the relatively low number of (European) members of our Society is an absolute necessity. Among other factors, a high number of members can determine the power and importance of a society. The impressive increase of participants at biennial and intercontinental congresses together with the yearly General Assembly, the updated scientific programmes and the meritorious efforts of the working groups accentuates the high quality of these meetings and reflects the need for further education. The organizers deserve compliments and respect. Hard work! The recent acquisition of property in Brussels where the official seat of the ESP will be established adds a new dimension to the professionalization of the Society.

MM: How do you see the future of pathology?

UvH: Focusing on diagnostic pathology, an outsider who still takes a look behind the scenes, could mention: declining autopsy rates are a risk, immunohistochemistry will continue to evolve, new knowledge at the molecular as well as on the genetic level will continue to enrich us, diagnostic electronmicroscopy will shrink except for renal, muscle and metabolic diseases, more subspecialties (e.g. clinical autopsy pathology, molecular pathology, computational pathology, molecular cytopathology) will require more teamwork between general pathologists and subspecialists

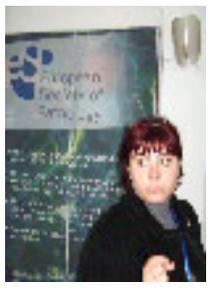
MM: finally, what advice do you have for young pathology residents at the start of their career?

UvH: To combine research and training for pathology. If this task is too heavy he/she could start with 2-3 years full-time research and write a doctoral thesis. After getting several periods of practical training in the different fields of pathology the trainee should be given the opportunity for subspecialty in house and abroad. Publish and lecture: coming into the public eye is not a disgrace! Take management courses.

MM: Thank you Urbain, for your time now and for the dedication to the Society. I hope to see you soon in Brussels or at one of the meetings.

Prof. Mia Marichal

My First Impressions of the European Society of Pathology



Before sharing my first impressions of the European Society of Pathology, I need to briefly introduce myself, since you all need to know who I am.

Two words about my educational background: I have two master's degrees, in business administration and leadership and change management, and the defence of my doctoral dissertation in leadership and cross-cultural behaviour will take place at the beginning of next year. Thus, how lucky I was to find myself in the international environment of the ESP, which is undergoing such a transformation, where my knowledge and experience can be of practical use.

Psychologists say that when you meet someone for the first time, you create an initial impression in the first twenty minutes. Since people are the driving force of any society or organisation, the impression I got was that here I can be innovative and use my creativity; that my everyday job will not have the taste of commerce, bureaucracy and pure administration, but will give me the feeling of mission. This is what highly motivates me.

When I started my position, I stepped into the ESP online world of communication and international networking mainly by e-mail. Surprisingly to me, this virtual ESP administration and coordination involving many unique personalities, works very well. This method is so effective that the society is continuously developing and growing.

I realize how fortunate I am to be able to work in a non-commercial, unique, academic, and non-profit environment, amongst world-renowned professionals. The great challenge for me is that I am the only non-doctor amongst all you pathologists! This whole new medical cross-cultural world is the best working environment I could have dreamt of.

Already, after only six months, my first impression has not changed, and my loyalty to this society, and my feeling of mission to the organisation are growing.

Kраси Serguieva

Flash News

The ESP New Office in BRUSSELS

A crucial step in the professionalisation of ESP is the creation of an office in Brussels. On the second of October, 2008, with the signature of the President Fred Bosman, the ESP purchased an attractive office in Brussels, where professionals will support administration and organisation of our activities. Different meetings and other activities can also be planned in the office.



5th of July, 2008 members of the ESP Executive Committee visit the unfinished office

