JOIN US for an exciting meeting in VIENNA

From Gert Mayer, 53rd ERA-EDTA Congress President

Vienna will host the 53rd congress of the ERA-EDTA in collaboration with the Austrian Society of Nephrology congress from May 21 till May 24, 2016. The main theme of the meeting is “From big data to personalized therapy – biostatistics meets molecular medicine”.

Only recently the meaningful analysis of large data sets obtained in medical research has become feasible amongst others within the realm of systems biology, which focuses to decipher complex biological networks and pathways. Hypothesis free exploratory research experimentally has long being considered an antagonistic approach to “classical” natural science but it is becoming increasingly evident that both approaches are indeed complementary. This concept will be put forward in a plenary talk by Andrew Kasarskis, Associate Professor and Co-Director of the Icahn Institute for Genomics and Multiscale Biology/Mount Sinai/New York. Icahn aims to integrate many layers of biological, clinical and environmental data to characterize and understand complex human diseases.

One goal of big data integration efforts is to better characterize groups of patients or even individuals with diseases to clear the way to more “personalized” medicine. Besides the fact, that current disease classification might have to change from a phenotype driven mode to a molecular disease entity description, the scientific community will be facing enormous challenges to deliver clinical evidence of proof of this new approach so that it will be accepted by clinicians and regulatory agencies. Nicholas Schork, Professor at Scripps Research Institute/San Diego will delineate how the research study design and environment will have to adapt in order to meet these needs.

Finally Kathryn Wood, Professor of Immunology at Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences/UK will speak about transplant tolerance and show how complex systems already can be captured and even manipulated successfully.

Next to many other excellent sessions and talks the Congress will again also host a “Renal Run”. The Austria Center Vienna is located within a huge recreational area and thus provides an ideal environment for sports activities and discussions with friends in a relaxing environment. Additionally we are planning a collaboration with Médecins Sans Frontiers to promote their activities. Hoping to see you soon in Vienna!
Three years with the DESCARTES ERA-EDTA Working Group - what has been achieved and what’s in the pipeline

From Søren Schwartz Sørensen on behalf of the DESCARTES board

DESCARTES is the acronym for Development Education Science and Care for Renal Transplantation in European States. The founding meeting was held in May 2012. DESCARTES held its first CME course in May 2013 and has since organized, and/or contributed to, 9 CME courses in the field of transplantation. The last CME course, entitled “Hot spots in renal transplantation - from donor management to tolerance” took place in Wroclaw, Poland, on December 11th 2015.

One goal for the DESCARTES WG has been, under the auspices of ERA-EDTA, to try to speed up the agenda for renal transplantation in Europe. This has already resulted in publications with position statements on how to increase the donor pool, transplantation in the elderly and, to be published shortly, guidelines for pre-emptive transplantation. DESCARTES is presently working on a simple set of parameters to be used for benchmarking access to transplantation in the European states.

The scientific work has been concentrated on projects with potential high yield for daily practices, and/or for improving knowledge in areas not normally supported by industry. One key project has been on operational tolerance, where the first presentation was awarded best abstract at the ESOT Congress on 15th September 2015 in Brussels. Further projects within the area of operational tolerance are already launched. The second key project is concentrated on optimising outcome in transplantation in the elderly. The core facility is a multicentre European registry planned to run for 10 years and to include 1000 patients. Embedded in this is a randomised controlled trial on minimization of immunosuppression. This project will be launched within the coming month and will recruit patients from more than 30 transplant centres in more than 10 European countries.

The founding of the DESCARTES Working Group by ERA-EDTA has truly created a new and needed platform for European work within the field of transplantation. Read more in our newsletters by visiting the ERA-EDTA website www.era-edta.org (then click on Working Groups & Research, Scientific Working Groups, Descartes, Newsletters).
ERA-EDTA meets National Societies

From Christoph Wanner

Under the motto “What ERA-EDTA can do for your National Society - What National Societies can do for ERA-EDTA” regular meetings with National Societies of Nephrology from across Europe and countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea were initiated 3 years ago.

Starting with a new format of “Meetings between ERA-EDTA and National Society Representatives” after the Opening Ceremonies of the Annual Congresses, the first ‘Come Together’ was held in Istanbul May 18, 2013, followed by Amsterdam 2014 and London 2015. It became rapidly clear that intense networking deserves more time and the first full day NATIONAL SOCIETIES’ MEETING was held October 12-13, 2013 in Würzburg (Germany), followed by Bari (Italy) in 2014 and Innsbruck (Austria) in 2015.

The most important topics that were discussed were (i) the current initiatives and the future of ERA-EDTA, (ii) European Kidney Health Alliance (EKHA) and its annual Spring Forum, (iii) European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS), CME regulations and education in Nephrology across European countries. The latter and very important discussion about harmonization of education, including results of two surveys, culminated in a publication of a Renal Section UEMS paper in the Clinical Kidney Journal (CKJ advance access, Dec 28; 2015, Gleeson PJ et al). The paper was published recognizing the cooperation among the UEMS Renal Section (chair: J. Cannata-Andia), the main ERA-EDTA persons implicated in this task and the National Presidents. During the meetings, National Societies also took advantage to present unique proposals seeking mutual support. Austria, Egypt, Estonia, France, Italy, Poland and Russia, so far, presented their projects. Each of the National societies’ meetings had an attendance from more than 30 European Societies whereas the congress dinner meetings welcomed up to 100 participants at the Amsterdam and London congress. National representatives were made known in person to the current representatives of the Society, i.e. all members of the Council, the Committee chairs, the Working Group chairs, the Registry chair and managing director, the SAB (Scientific Advisory Board), The YNP chairs (Young Nephrologists’ Platform), the EKHA representatives (European Kidney Health Alliance), the CME Committee chair and in the future the ERA-EDTA European Regional Advisory Board chairs.

It appears that, unified under an umbrella, joining forces and marching together for one goal ‘advancing nephrology in Europe’ is the most successful strategy at present.

Some personal reflection on leaving ERA-EDTA Scientific Advisory Board co-chair

From Heini Murer, SAB Co-Chair

Here are a few personal remarks on my experiences within the ERA-EDTA Scientific Advisory Board (SAB). As a ‘renal physiologist’ I had my first ‘direct contacts’ with ERA-EDTA officers as Chairman of the Scientific Programme Committee of the first World Congress of Nephrology (2003 in Berlin); the related discussions (and results) were for me a documentation of the potential of ‘European Nephrology’ to contribute to the advancement of the Nephrology Discipline also on a ‘global level’. A few years later, I was very proud being asked by ERA-EDTA officers to be a candidate for the SAB and to act as its Co-chair. I started in March 2009 as an ordinary member and will finish in May 2016 as its Co-chair (since June 2010). The SAB was established by the ERA-EDTA Council in order to strengthen the ‘Scientific Culture’ within the association and to evaluate the different programs established by ERA-EDTA for the promotion of young talents in renal research and renal clinical practice and for renal research programs. For me it was always a very particular goal to contribute to an increased visibility of European renal research achievements corresponding to its great potential, including especially the support of young talents. As my term as SAB-Co-chair ends, I do hope that the work of the SAB is judged as important within the Society. Finally, I do hope that ERA-EDTA will also be in the future in a position to support especially young talents in their development to be future leaders in ‘renal research’. Thereby, today’s political / economical conditions make sometimes ‘decisions’ difficult, but scientific quality and ‘future potential’ must always remain the key arguments in (decisions and) recommendations by the SAB!
The Young Nephrologists’ Platform (YNP) is growing and continues to develop exciting activities that aim to promote education and to foster communication among young European nephrologists.

The most recent initiative launched by the YNP is the Hot Topics program. This program is developed to help young nephrologists (or even older!) to get informed on hot topics in Nephrology and to interact with key opinion leaders in these areas.

Bimonthly, the YNP Board chooses a theme or topic to be published. Then, we start working! With each topic, we develop a short text, with various key points on the topic; we provide some details or unknown news about it (in the section Do you know that?); we post an image (when feasible); and finally, we choose an article about the topic and invite an expert to discuss the related article (Meet the expert section). Very simple!

These Hot Topics are then published at both YNP and NDT-Educational websites. Once published, any NDT-Educational user can participate, via the NDT-Educational blog, by adding questions, comments, or anything they feel may be important. This is a unique opportunity to have an open dialogue and network with the experts.

Additionally, nephrologists (not only the young) can test their knowledge with the YNP quizzes. So, now that you understand the concept, we invite you to visit our webpage (www.era-edta.org, then click on Young Nephrologists) and participate! We have already released some topics: aHUS, renal fibrosis, and amyloidosis. FGF23 is coming next!

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The “new” ckj will waive fees for 2016

From Alberto Ortiz, Editor-in-Chief of ckj

The “new” ckj was successfully re-launched with the February issue of 2015 as an online-only, open access journal contriving to be an essential educational and training resource integrating clinical, translational and educational research into clinical practice. As of December 15, 2015, 568 ckj manuscripts were freely accessible through Pubmed to the community. 2015 saw solid growth of Original Articles and ckj Reviews submissions as authors took advantage of a fee waiver for 2015 that has now been extended into 2016. The focus on excellence has resulted in a 33% acceptance rate, and we feel confident that as a result, the ckj readership enjoys a high quality and updated contents.

Push the Altmetric Score of your NDT or CKJ paper!

Altmetric has been implemented on NDT and CKJ – one can now monitor the article-level metrics of all the articles that have been published in these two journals! When viewing an article on the website, just click on ‘Article metrics’ to the right hand side of the article in the ‘Services’ column – and find out about the attention that the article has received so far.

Altmetric is a system that measures, how often (and where) a paper has been mentioned in the web (e.g. on Twitter, Facebook, blogs or online mainstream media as well as in online reference managers, such as Mendeley and CiteULike). Thus, Altmetrics captures how much attention a research paper has gathered and provides a complete view of the impact of an article, with real time data showing how people are interacting and engaging with research online.

The altmetric score of a paper can also be actively influenced by the authors themselves. “Sharing your article online is vital for increasing its impact”, explains Prof. Carmine Zoccali, CKJ Editor-in-Chief. On the NDT website you find various tips and tricks on how to push the Altmetric score of your article. Just visit www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/ndt/altmetrics_articles.html and make the most of it!
During the last ASN Meeting in San Diego, ERA-EDTA and ASN co-facilitated the 2015 International Forum of Kidney Organizations (November 4, 2015). Prof. Wiecek, as ERA-EDTA President, represented ERA-EDTA. The topics addressed included summarizing the efforts by ASN, ERA-EDTA, and the ISN, that have been working more closely together since fall 2014. The participants also suggested ways in which the three Societies can work together, the most important being to discuss how each organization deals with prevention and guideline implementation. A very interesting article was then presented to the audience: “Maintenance Dialysis throughout the World in Years 1990 and 2010”. Finally participants shared the biggest problem facing the nephrology community in their country and how their national society is attempting to overcome this challenge.

On November 6th 2015, Prof. Andrzej Wiecek - President of ERA-EDTA and Prof. Philip Li - President of ISPD (International Society of Peritoneal Dialysis) signed an agreement which formalizes the collaboration between these two Societies. The agreement was signed in San Diego as a result of negotiations done in London at ERA-EDTA Congress, 2015. Both Societies agreed to exchange scientific sessions on their Congresses. It will start in February 2016 at the ISPD Congress in Melbourne (Australia) and will continue in May at the ERA-EDTA Congress in Vienna. Furthermore both Societies agreed to advertise these sessions on respective websites and in official Journals. This new document will certainly open the door for the future more effective and creative collaboration between ERA-EDTA and ISPD with a common goal which is an improvement of care of our patients with CKD.

If you have a photo or a story idea that could be of interest to the Follow Us readership then we would like to hear from you. Whether it’s about a place or an interesting event, a well-known personality or an unusual anecdote, then please contact us by sending an email to followus@era-edta.org
In a recent issue of Follow Us, there was an article entitled “The Kidney and the Hen”. Now, the theme of correlating human and animal renal functions continues. Apart from its humorous side, the title of this article implies the time-honoured tradition of associating and likening human functions with those of animals; though ridiculed since the Enlightenment, this has recently returned via the back door of experimental animals and ecology.

Ancient Greek and Byzantine medical authors including Hippocrates, Galen, Stephanos of Alexandria, Theophilus Protospatarios and Johannes Zacharias all suggested that foul-smelling urine is due either to a urinary tract infection or a generalised wasting disease, even before any symptoms appear. This notion was verified by Franky, a dog at the School of Medical Sciences in Arkansas University. It was able to detect thyroid cancer by sniffing patients’ urine, even when they were symptom-free, with an 88% success rate. The method, although correct, cannot be used widely so researchers have built a device called the “Odoreader” that can sense odours in patients’ urine, giving promise of an easier way of testing for bladder cancer.

Interestingly, one of the chemical substances found in increased concentration in the urine of patients with generalised cancer is caproic acid. The name derives from the Latin word ‘caper’, meaning a billy-goat. Its scent is disgusting for humans but a strong aphrodisiac for female goats. Sophisticated modern methods prove that the urine of a patient with cancer may smell like a goat. Surprisingly, using only his nose, Galen wrote in the 1st century: “Because in some melting diseases the nature of all secretions is consumed, because even during the time that [he] looks healthy his nature is close to decaying, as we can conclude from the smelly perspirations, the urines, and the stools and even the breath, which nature is like the billy-goat’s composition”. Modern literatures says: “…the stabbing odour traced in the urine derives from the six-carbon caproic acid … which is an endogenously produced metabolite. It is used in metabolic reactions, catabolic reactions or waste generation.”

Assuming readers are not too tired or bored, one further corridor into the nephrological zoo will be presented in a future issue of “Follow Us”!


Voting at the 2016 Council Elections

On 23 May 2016 during the General Assembly in Vienna, Austria, two Ordinary Council Members must be elected as M. Jadoul (Belgium) and G. Mayer (Austria) will be ending their terms.

All full members of the ERA-EDTA will be able to vote for a maximum two (2) candidates.

Only electronic voting will be available before the Congress and onsite during the Vienna Congress and will be open from midnight on 21 April 2016 until the start of the General Assembly at 9.30 (CEST) on 23 May 2016.

Full members will receive, in plenty of time, a username/password to participate in the elections. Please note that voting credentials (username/password) will be sent only by e-mail: if you wish to receive your credentials by post, please contact the ERA-EDTA Membership Office allowing enough time for the letter to reach you (Via XXIV Maggio 38; I-43123 Parma; Italy; Fax +39-0521-959242; Phone: +39-344-149076; Email: membership@era-edta.org).

Details of the 2016 Ordinary Council Member Candidates and the link to access the online voting can be found on the ERA-EDTA website www.era-edta.org and click on ‘About ERA-EDTA’ and then ‘ERA-EDTA Council Candidates 2016’.

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