

ESC NEWSLETTER - Volume 5 - Number 3 - 2008

Newsletter from The European Society of Contraception and Reproductive Health

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Editorial



Dear colleagues and friends,

This September newsletter will only be sent by email. The reason for this is that we need to align the times of the newsletter to fit in with when the journal is published. You will see in your September journal, a copy of the June newsletter! So, in order to catch up with ourselves, we are not producing a hard copy of this September newsletter. It will be on the ESC web site.

From the end of the year we plan to send out the email version of the newsletter at the same time as you receive your journal and that will contain a hard paper copy. We are continuing to provide the newsletter in all these formats because we do not have email addresses for everyone and also, some people do not have access to our website.

In this addition, the organisers of the very successful Prague Congress, David Cibula and Vit Unzeitig describe the event and there is also a summary of the evaluation report.

The Spanish Society held their 9th Congress, entitled 'Changing Attitudes' in Seville from 12-14 March 2008; a report is enclosed. A well attended debate was the one discussing the relationship between public health administration, the pharmaceutical industry and the medical profession.

The ESC chooses a different charity to support each year and currently this is Save the Children. This edition includes a heart-warming description of their work in Serbia with disabled, orphan and Roma children.

Finally, the United Nations has produced 2 documents; one on World Contraceptive use and one on Abortion Care. These are available on their website: www.unpopulation.org. This link has been added to our ESC website.

Sarah Randall
Chief Editor

Summary

A brief summary of the ESC congress in Prague, April - May 2008

Dear colleagues and friends,

We were asked to evaluate this year's ESC congress in Prague. Obviously, we are biased, but still we do believe that it was very successful and that you enjoyed your stay in Prague. For both of us, it also meant a zenith of our ESC-related activity – one of us is leaving the position of the society's president, the other, after twelve years, is resigning from the Board of Directors.



Vít Unzeitig and David Cibula

First, some raw numbers: this congress was the largest so far in the ESC's history (2800 participants from 89 countries), with a record number of submitted abstracts (361) and also the most economically profitable for the society (final values are not yet available). In the realm of the scientific programme, individual workshops of 6 national and international science societies took place.

For the first time, ESC expert groups undertook individual sessions. There was a Young Scientist session, where the best young scientist was selected. A special prize for the best poster was also awarded for the first time, based on the vote of all participants of the conference.



10th ESC Congress

The vast spaces of the Prague congress center meant we could have many parallel sessions so that each participant could find his or her own favorite subjects. There was simultaneously translation into French and Russian and because of this a record number of colleagues from the former Soviet bloc countries participated in the conference. The main lecture blocks were recorded and are now available to ESC members through the internet.



Opening ceremony

We are delighted that, during the whole conference, one could feel a busy, yet friendly atmosphere. The quality of the program was successfully competing with the attractions of Prague's old town, and the participants usually lingered in the congress center spaces until late afternoon. Also, the majority of discussions going on in the congress' lobbies did not concern the quality of Czech beer or Prague's rich cultural offerings, but rather hormones and infections.



Congress Hall

It is almost unfair that three years' worth of effort by a large number of people translates into a mere three days of the conference. The exceptionally successful scientific program was due to a creative group of experts in the International Scientific Committee and it was realized by several dozens of renowned lecturers from the whole world. Without their professional and social effort the successful realization of this undertaking would not be possible. Our heartfelt thanks go to our Czech colleagues from the local organizational committee, the Guarant agency of Prague, and to the ESC Executive Committee members. A special appreciation goes to the faithful threesome of our closest friends from the ESC Central Office – Peter Erard, Ria Maes and Nancy Habils. As always, their performance was outstanding.

Last but not least, a special thank you belongs to all our sponsors and exhibitors. Without their exceptional support the conference would lack many professional and social activities. To the conference's imaginary cake, they've contributed sweet cherries of various sizes that the participants could enjoy every day.



Poster area

We are grateful to those who, four years ago, honored us with their trust, and this year visited us in Prague again after ten years. We did our best not to disappoint you – how we succeeded, everybody will judge for him or herself. See you in The Hague!

David Cibula & Vít Unzeitig

Evaluation

Prague Conference Evaluation

ESC takes evaluation very seriously and commissions an organisation to undertake this on behalf of the ESC.

This year they interviewed 162 delegates including doctors, nurses, sponsors, pharmaceutical representatives and students. The conference venue, visual techniques, poster viewing and accommodation were all highly scored. Achieving the right balance within the scientific programme is always difficult because of the variety of participants; despite this, the score was good. Simultaneous translation only scored an average 3, but no reasons were listed.

The majority felt that the conference covered the topics that interested them, with 60% appreciating the presentations; a third really enjoyed the 'Meet the Expert' sessions and 'Workshops' with slightly fewer commenting on the Free Communication and Forum opportunities. A list of other items they would have liked to be included will be passed to the scientific committee for the next Congress in The Hague.

This group were also asked about how they had learnt about the congress and answers included direct mailing, newsletter or journal, friend, other congresses and via sponsors.

Participants at the Congress, Keynote, Plenary and Forum sessions were given evaluation forms to complete. We do not know how many actually attended each session, but the evaluation forms returned varied from 364 at Congress Session 3 to 47 at Keynote 1. We are appreciative of this information as it feeds into our future congresses and seminars. The speakers were rated on content and presentation and overall the scores were excellent, with some speakers achieving very high scores.

Spanish Society of Contraception

The Spanish Society held their 9th Congress, entitled 'Changing Attitudes' in Seville from 12-14 March 2008

The inaugural lecture was given by Dr Carmen Coll Capdevila on 'Changing attitudes to contraception' and the closing lecture on 'Mass media and changes in attitude to contraception' by Mr. Manuel Ángel Vázquez Medel.



The topics covered in the 8 sessions included the latest advances in contraception; contraception in special situations i.e. under 16s, disability and second generation immigrants; scientific discussion on the ideal dosage of oestrogen, types of progestogen and methods of administration. A well attended debate was the one discussing the relationship between public health administration, the pharmaceutical industry and the medical profession. The last session looked at how best to facilitate collaboration between the general practitioner with their clinical knowledge and the epidemiologist with their ability to facilitate research and make sense of the clinical data. Satellite symposia were held on cervical cancer, the hormonal patch, HPV vaccination and "do women need periods?".

The Society included their first Latin American meeting with representatives from Ecuador, Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay, Peru and Chile. At this Latin American session it was agreed to set up the Latin American Confederation of Contraception (CIC), a transoceanic association whose aim is the promotion and dissemination of scientific knowledge of contraceptive methods among the population. The first CIC Board was elected at this meeting.

Save the Children

Save the Children in Serbia

Please find here an update we received from the Save the Children project in Serbia which is supported by the ESC.

Since 2003 Save the Children has been focusing on child protection and education. We work with disadvantaged children, including those with disabilities, orphans and Roma children. The main focus of our education programme is promoting quality inclusive pre-primary and primary education for all children, targeting the most marginalised and poorest children. We have established more than 30 Toy Libraries across Serbia. We have managed to increase enrolment in schools through workgroups that identify out-of-school children and help them to access education. In Pirot, Serbia, a database was created that identified 393 Roma children and 183 disabled children who were not accessing education. After providing support 357 Roma children and 154 disabled children are now accessing education. This model has been used to create similar workshops in other locations across Europe. Progress towards replication of our services has been made with the municipality taking over this project in Pirot.



A "School bus" for Roma children

Roma Children

Roma are the group most at risk of poverty in South East Europe. Persistent disadvantages in education, including low school attendance and over-representation in 'special schools' originally intended for disabled children, lead to later difficulties in accessing the labour market. Save the Children is working towards an education system which is truly inclusive, incorporating the teaching of Roma languages and mainstreaming of the teaching of Roma history and culture. We work with children, Roma communities, non-governmental organizations (NGO's), schools and government authorities to jointly plan project activities. One of the important outcomes of the project was that pre-schools and schools took a proactive role in children's lives. Increased number of conversations and interventions to overcome difficulties in education, greater variety and improved quality of child-led and peer-to-peer clubs and extracurricular activities made many Roma children believe that school could help them to be successful in their lives, have better employment and improved social status.



Vladanka demonstrating her weaving skills at the Toy Library project

Vladanka

Barely four years ago, Vladanka (15) hardly knew how to behave in public. Her extremely poor achievements in the first four grades of primary school led to her being classified as a 'child with disabilities' and moved to a class with a special programme. Usually this would mean a lifelong stigma not matched by an improvement in skills. Luckily for Vladanka, her teacher in the special school was Nina, a young woman who runs 'Embrace', the local non governmental organization supported by Save the Children for integration of disabled children. Years of individual work with Nina and a creative play-time with other children in the Toy Library established by Save the Children have boosted Vladanka's self confidence and skills. Save the Children's community rehabilitation approach worked well for Vladanka as it has for thousands of other children and their families throughout the region since 1997. Through the Toy Library, Vladanka has discovered her passion for weaving. Vladanka finished eighth grade with top marks and is continuing her education in a special technical school for handicrafts which will enable her to earn a living. "Yes, I like it very much" she says, her face shining with a broad smile. Today Vladanka is taking an active, responsible role in the Toy Library by helping, teaching and supporting other children.

Aiming at achieving lasting changes in the national legal and institutional frameworks, Save the Children partnered with UNICEF and local parents' associations to improve community level service provision for disabled children between 2000-2004. Building on that experience, the EU has funded the project "Reducing the Effects of Poverty for Children with Special Needs in Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo" that extends community based rehabilitation to 16 municipalities in Serbia over a four-year period (2006-2010).

ESC events

10th ESC Seminar

Theme: barriers to modern contraception: use and possible solutions
Belgrade, Serbia
18 and 19 September 2009
Hosting organizer: K. Sedlecki -A. Mitrovic
Info: seminar@contraception-esc.com

11th ESC Congress

Theme: Culture, Communication and Contraception
The Hague, The Netherlands
19 to 22 May 2010
Hosting organizers: R. Beerthuisen and R. van Lunsen
Info: congress@contraception-esc.com

ESC sessions during other meetings:

Clinical Conference 'Reproductive Health 2008' of the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals

(Washington, 17 to 20 September 2008)

FIAPAC Congress

(Berlin, 24 - 25 October 2008)

FIGO 2009 Congress

(Cape Town, South Africa, 4 to 9 October 2009)

All materials to be included in the ESC Newsletter should be submitted (electronically) to the:

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All Newsletters are also to be found on the website of the Society: www.contraception-esc.com (go to 'News')

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