

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Since the last ESSFN Newsletter many serious things happened to our Society and our world. We are presently living a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, a disease that we did not even imagine that would exist one year ago.

Last year we still had normal social and scientific events that fulfilled our calendar, the principal was the New York 17th WSSFN Congress in June. It was the last scientific summit of our worldwide Society, a very good meeting organized by Michael Schulder where we could get together directly with colleagues of all the continents and change our experiences with one another as usual. A new WSSFN Board was elected, chaired by Jin Woo Chang from Seoul with the participation of Jean Régis; I shall be the continental WSSFN vice-president for Europe as ESSFN president.

Our ESSFN hands-on courses were held as scheduled: in February 2019 we had the Course on Surgery for Epilepsy in Gent chaired by Dirk Van Roost, in September 2019 the Course on Pain and Spasticity in Lisbon chaired by Patrick Mertens and I, in February 2020 the Course on Movement Disorders in Amsterdam chaired by Rick Schuurman and in November 2020 the ESSFN/EANS course on Radiosurgery (with some participants present, other attending by videoconference) in Marseille chaired by Jean Régis. All had a great success, with many attendees and interested audiences.

In what concerns our XXIV ESSFN Congress to be held in Marseille organized by Jean Régis, as you all know it was initially scheduled in September 2020 but finally postponed in September 2021, 8-11th, due to the pandemic.

I hope that by that time, everything will be about to normalize, the COVID-19 controlled with everyone (or almost) vaccinated, so we can have the normal conditions to hold a great congress as we expect. The entire ESSFN needs it and the local organizers deserve it. The next WSSFN Congress will be held in Seoul and it was postponed too, in 2022.

Recently there was the renewal of Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery, now the Chief-editor being Andrés Lozano assisted by new editorial board members. A strong intention of renovating the journal, our journal, has been declared in order to make it more interesting, more participated and with a greater impact factor. I expect our contribution will help.

Meanwhile we all are still passing through a difficult period of renew pandemic severity, again with confinements and constraints worse than before. Fortunately the vaccine is coming, but time still must elapse before our normal working and social conditioning may be retaken.

I sincerely hope and expect that a progressive normalization of our life as individuals and as ESSFN members will not take too long.

Sincerely yours with my best wishes of a Happy New Year,

António José Gonçalves Ferreira



MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

Dear Friends,

We are experiencing very unique and unexpected times. I hope you and your family are well and healthy during these times of uncertainty.

Functional Neurosurgery has been stopped in numerous countries during several months and is still lethargic in some of them.

When the painful decision was taken by the officers to postpone our 2020 congress in Marseille we proposed to organize, at roughly the same dates, an ESSFN course. We were lucky enough, in between the two waves, to be able to hold in Marseille a hybrid course. The course, dedicated to radiosurgery, was at the same time a module of the European diploma of Functional Neurosurgery of the ESSFN and the first module of the recently launched European Diploma of Radiosurgery jointly organized by the ESSFN and the EANS.

Coming from 25 different countries, 30 participants logged in from the beginning until the end of the 3 days-course (few of them were with us physically). The Faculty included 23 speakers from 13 different European countries from both scientific societies. Some of them were with us physically, others unable to travel had sent their lectures in a video format. The Faculty was a mixture of physicians and physicists working with a variety of different radiosurgical platforms (Gamma Knife, Novalis, Cyberknife and ZAPX). Questions from the attendees were received by emails and answered on a live mode. The lectures are still available online for the attendees. Accuray, Brainlab, Elekta and ZAP were sponsoring the event.

On the occasion of the course in Marseille a "virtual" executive committee was organized with a good attendance from the different countries represented in the Excom. The Educational Committee of the ESSFN is working on how to adapt the format of the courses according to the pandemic.

Amongst our community we are numerous to feel deprived from human contact and scientific lively exchanges we were used to during congresses and courses.

We all hope the situation will allow us to organize a scientifically very successful congress in Marseille (September 8-11, 2021).

Let's hope we can return to some normality and perhaps kick off with our meeting in Marseille next year. We have all been going through difficult times and it will be wonderful to meet everybody, once again.

Warmest regards,

Jean Régis



MESSAGE FROM THE TREASURER

Dear Friends,

In February 2020 the ESSFN-course on movement disorders in Amsterdam was visited by almost 50 participants and some 15 faculty members. For many this was the last opportunity to travel abroad this year, as only a few weeks later the first viral wave spread across Europe. We have especially missed seeing each other during the bi-annual celebration of science and friendship that was to take place in September in Marseille.

From a financial perspective this was a dormant year. As the membership fees are used to cover the expenses of running the society and these costs were exceptionally low, the officers and the executive committee decided to waive all individual membership contributions for the year 2020. This is why you did not receive a letter for payment to the ESSFN – but I promise I will catch up with you next year! Your online access to the journal *Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery* continues and this is your Christmas present this time from our society.

Let's hope we can all meet again at our conference in sunny Marseille in September 2021!

Rick Schuurman



MESSAGE FROM THE YOUNG FUNCTIONAL NEUROSURGEONS

The COVID-19 pandemic has (had) an enormous impact on the general neurosurgical care, as well as the functional neurosurgery in countries throughout Europe. Generally, urgent neurosurgical care and neuro-oncology continued without too much restriction, but, as we have learned from a short round among young neurosurgeons across Europe, functional neurosurgical care has been put on a lower priority in several countries (e.g. Netherlands, Germany). Candidates for new implants (DBS, SCS, baclofen, VNS) are frequently postponed, while stimulator and pump replacements do get planned. A practice not likely to differ during subsequent waves of the pandemic with or without another lockdown. However, it is interesting to notice that national neurosurgical societies act sometimes slightly different. In Germany the neurosurgical society gave out a list of elective and non-elective surgeries, stating that elective surgeries were to be avoided. DBS procedures were not listed as non-elective, however all kinds of pain-relieving procedures (which would also include SCS) were labelled non-elective. Other societies leave planning and decisions on priority of types of procedures to individual hospitals, although design of national health care systems can also play a role.

The reductions in primary elective functional procedures have inevitable consequences on education and teaching practices, not even to mention the growing anxiety among patients, especially those with progressive, neurodegenerative disease. We see that residents and fellows encounter lower numbers of procedures, resulting in possibly less experience or necessarily prolonged internships. International travelling restrictions preclude new fellowships to be started and real life courses to take place. On the other hand, interesting new initiatives with frequent, short webinars and online teaching activities provide an alternative approach. These activities may currently replace traditional teaching but they could complement established future course education once society has returned to „business as usual“.

However, one of the most attractive features of an international course or meeting, such as the highly rewarded ESSFN Hands On Course, remains its social aspect; our small but active group of international young neurosurgeons would not have acquainted without the ESSFN cycle.

The limitations of the COVID pandemic can also lead to new research and care activities. In the uncertainty of sufficient resources and whether supply chains would work as usual, Martin Jakobs from Germany attempted to avoid DBS patients with IPGs to completely deplete and come to the emergency department. He developed an information pamphlet with a step-by-step walkthrough how to check the battery charge with their corresponding handheld programmer and provided different means of (also online) contact information. This active checkup provided a timely window of order//delivery//implant of new devices that might have prevented possible complications. An interesting question would be the discussion of rechargeable vs non-rechargeable IPGs in light of the pandemic. It is due to our close relation that we can collaborate and work on developments as these that might be useful to any other country or hospital. With this initiative we build up to the conclusion in which we encourage young neurosurgeons to actively seek contact if (solutions for) barriers in functional neurosurgical care are encountered or new research initiatives are proposed.

Stay healthy and keep in touch!

Niels van der Gaag, The Netherlands

Kuan Kho, The Netherlands

Øystein Tveiten, Norway

Martin Jakobs, Germany

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ABSTRACT SUBMISSION
DEADLINE: 20 MAY 2021

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XXIV Congress of the European Society
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