The past, present and future of gastroenterology in Europe and worldwide

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Recent publication of the UEG “White Book”, with the outcomes of the Survey of digestive health across Europe and the announcement of the Healthcare Scenarios in Europe in 2040 by the UEG Future Trends Committee nicely corroborate into the comprehensive and very clear picture of the past, present and future of gastroenterology in Europe and worldwide. Even though both reports (very reasonably) play on pessimistic notes (increase in the incidence and prevalence of GI diseases, ageing of the population, deteriorating lifestyle that has a tremendous impact on the pathologies developing within the GI tract), they also suggest (and here please do forgive us our optimism) that there will be a lot happening within the field, involving both clinicians and basic scientists, what in fact is a good news for current and future gastroenterologists. These unenthusiastic raw data in fact is good news for all the young people directing their career toward gastroenterology. Come, there is work to do!

The UEG Future Trends Committee proposed three scenarios that could take a stage within the next quarter of a century. The Ice Age, although equally possible, should rather be viewed as a well-set list of what are NOT our goals in the European gastroenterology. It could be printed and pinned to the cork message boards everywhere to be read not only doctors, but – in fact primarily – by politicians and policy makers, who will be taking over within the next few years. This “black” scenario points to a divided Society, with a few very rich people, and a great majority of citizens having poor medical care and no funding for research or prevention. However, it also underlines what is inevitable – populations are ageing, while lifestyle disorders, particularly important for GI tract pathology become a major issue.

Life in the Golden Age seems like the one in the Garden of Eden, with Europe-wide prevention programs, unified trainings, and cross-continent expert centers, all which serve better life and health of ageing populations. However, this also means that the

economic growth is sufficient to allow a financial stabilization and funds for clinical care and scientific research. This is only partially dependent on the gastroenterologists.

Would anyone like to live in the Silicon Age? The high-tech machines and advanced research are indeed appealing, but doesn't it all sound like a slightly self-centered, de-humanized care (additionally assisted by social media and e-gadgets and triggering enormous costs)? The answer to this question is not very obvious.

Still, we left out the role of the young GI clinicians and researchers in this relatively near future. Judging by these scenarios and the current situation in gastroenterology, described in the UEG White book – what could be done to prepare the young gastroenterologists to respond best to all the needs? Here we suggest taking a look again at the Golden Age and shaping the future based on its image. Let's encourage clinical and research trainings to equilibrate and then constantly increase the healthcare standards in gastroenterology. Why not establish the cross-continent expert centers to better understand, but also better treat GI diseases? All this starting now, and with the help and involvement of the young generations of the gastroenterologists. Let's put them in the spotlight and wisely invest in them to guarantee our future living in the Golden Age.

Share your thoughts and comments on the situation across Europe and the priorities for improving

service provision @my_UEG #shapingGI

To download the brand new brochure of the Survey visit www.ueg.eu/research/activities/

The full report can be found at: http://ueg.sagepub.com/site/White_Book/White_Book.xhtml

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