Continuous education in gastroenterology: the present and the future

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In the face of rapidly increasing medical knowledge and an ever-increasing array of diagnostic and therapeutic opportunities and offers from the medical and the para-medical field, continuous medical education is an obligation which is owed by doctors to their patients specifically, and to third party payers of health care and society in general. Continuous education has to provide doctors with the tools necessary to provide the best possible health care options to patients, considering the variable constraints of health care in different regions of Europe and the world, to understand the challenges of the future and to provide the research tools required for addressing them, and to make doctors fit for steering the public discussion of the future directions and developments of health care within their home countries, the different regions of Europe and beyond.

The Education Committee, in which all member societies are equally represented, has a central role in the structure of the UEG. Its objectives focus on establishing initiatives in the field of postgraduate teaching and advancing medical education into the field of e-learning. These goals shall be reached by strengthening UEG and its member associations as the providers of multidisciplinary postgraduate training and e-learning.

UEG has grown to be the leading European provider of education in the gastroenterology related fields of medical and surgical practice, including liver and pancreatico-biliary diseases, gastrointestinal oncology, endoscopic procedures, nutrition and intestinal microbiology. The Education Committee is responsible for identifying educational needs, filling existing gaps in medical education, advancing the quality of education and developing the educational resources for the future, including e-learning. To fulfil these tasks, the Education Committee is in close cooperation with UEG member societies and committees, and the major players outside the UEG, like the European Board of Gastroenterology and Hepatology (EBGH).

UEG has defined strategies for education that include provision of cutting edge education and training using best educational models, including fostering opportunities for on-site clinical and research training. Focus in education and training shall be put on reduction of pan-European health inequalities, provision of

equal opportunity, promotion of young talent, and improvement of clinical standards and guidelines.

General aims of education are to fill gaps of education not provided by member societies or UEG Week, to bring young basic scientists and young clinicians and scientists closer to UEG, to foster cooperation between European scientific centres and groups and activity based income sharing with member societies.

In this regard the Education Committee and the e-learning task force are currently reviewing clinical and research training and meetings organized by the committee, working on integration of the training opportunities into a syllabus, and reviewing and improving methods of assessment of education. The Education Committee is continuously monitoring and improving its cooperation with and financial support of UEG member societies. Considerable effort will be put into developing an integrated strategy and closer working links with European bodies working in professional training and accreditation, especially the EBGH, and to work with them on a European exam and European board certification.

During the past years, the UEG Education Committee has been highly successful in three areas:

- By establishing a programme to fund innovative educational programmes, as well as international scientific cooperation, it acts as a facilitator of cooperation between UEG member societies.
- Under the guidance of a highly motivated team of scientific course managers it has successfully established classroom courses which address teaching needs which are not answered by member societies.
- It has successfully developed a platform for e-learning which has already around 19,000 teaching items and thereby is one of the richest educational resources in the professional field. It has gathered an editorial team which is very well suited to develop UEG e-learning into the best resource of its kind in the world.

Some of the tasks which have been completed by the Education Committee since I have taken the position of Chair of the Education Committee in January 2015, or are currently under completion, are the development of a template for reporting on supported educational

projects to be used by course organizers, the definition of criteria of usability of course contents for the UEG e-learning platform and for a curriculum which is based on the EBGH Blue Book, and to increase the impact of gender balance in the faculty. The Education Committee is currently also re-evaluating hands-on training at Summer School and considering alternative ways in providing hands-on training and optimising teaching, assessing whether the goals of the Basic Science Course, which are provision of basic science teaching, attracting basic science to UEG Week and linking European research centres are reached, analysing target group specifications for course applications, monitoring the number of applicants and the costs per participant for courses and supported trainings, re-evaluating course feedback and reviewing of the impact of educational offers on the teaching objectives knowledge, competence, performance, skills and professional behaviour.

The future activities of the Education Committee will include the development of tools which are necessary to meet future teaching requirements, especially to strengthen e-learning; to provide financial and organisational support for UEG members in their educational activities, their intersociety interactions and their multidisciplinary and evidence based approach in postgraduate teaching; to develop training collaborations with leading European clinical institutions; and

to reform course evaluation, putting more emphasis on medium-term impact of courses and training on knowledge, competence, performance, skills and professional behaviour. Hands-on training and skills teaching will need to be re-evaluated including evaluation of the best possible ways of providing the best clinical and research training, like centralised hands-on courses vs. decentralised teaching centres. Finally, the relation between costs and educational gain will require continuous monitoring.

In cooperation with the UEG Young Talent Group and the National Societies Committee the Education Committee is working on the development of a European network of centres dedicated to clinical and research training. I strongly believe, that a focus shall be put on alternative teaching strategies including 'Train the hand', i.e. on-site training in European centres, or 'Train the brain', i.e. problem-solving courses which aim at improving analytical skills. Training and teaching shall put a focus on the 'Stairway of learning', i.e. starting with 'hearing', moving to 'seeing' and ultimately coming to 'doing'.

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