

## Editorial

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# The *European Society of Anaesthesiology*: Beginning of a new era in organized European anaesthesia

As of 1 January 2005, the *European Society of Anaesthesiology* (ESA) is in existence. The formation of this new Society is the result of the amalgamation of the previous *European Society of Anaesthesiologists* (ESA), the *European Academy of Anaesthesiology* (EAA) and the *Confederation of European National Societies of Anaesthesiologists* (CENSA), the European branch of the *World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists* (WFSA). Last year, the General Assemblies of all the three organizations approved the amalgamation of the three European anaesthesia organizations into one single international European anaesthesia organization. For many reasons, this amalgamation has to be considered a big success for European anaesthesiology.

### Obliged to succeed

The road to this success has not been easy and was beset by several obstacles. Differences in tradition, philosophy and legal structure made this inevitable. However, despite differences in opinion, the negotiating representatives of the former ESA, EAA and CENSA knew that failure to come to an agreement was not an option. Failure would have meant losing an opportunity of uniting European anaesthesia – an opportunity which might not have returned for some time, if at all.

### Only winners

There are no losers in this process. European anaesthesiology at large and all European anaesthesiologists stand to gain. By directly linking the new Society to the European Board of Anaesthesiology (EBA), a working group of the Section of Anaesthesiology of the *Union Européenne des Médecins Spécialistes* (UEMS), the amalgamation will yield a more powerful representation of anaesthesiology in Europe. When all

European anaesthesiologists speak with a single voice, their specific interests are more likely to be heard and considered.

### Clearly defined aims and activities

Aims and activities of the new Society are clearly defined in the by-laws. In summary, the Society's aims are:

- to promote the exchange of information between European anaesthesiologists;
- to disseminate information in regard to anaesthesiology;
- to raise the standards of the specialty by fostering and encouraging education, research, scientific progress and the exchange of information;
- to promote and protect the interest of its members;
- to promote improvements in safety and quality of care of patients undergoing anaesthesia by facilitating and harmonizing the activities of national and international societies of anaesthesiologists in Europe.

These aims will be met by:

- the Annual Meeting of the Society and the Society's Newsletter to promote exchange of information between anaesthesiologists in European countries (as defined by the World Health Organization);
- the Annual Meeting of the Society and the Society's Newsletter to disseminate information in regard to anaesthesiology;
- the Society's affiliation to a scientific journal, which is the *European Journal of Anaesthesiology* (EJA);
- the Society's research grants and awards to foster and encourage education, research and scientific progress, and raise the educational and scientific standards of the specialty of anaesthesiology;
- the links of the Society to the European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS) and the EBA to promote and protect the interests of its members, and to improve the quality of education;

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- the Hospital Visiting Programme to ensure that training centres fulfil all the conditions to provide an adequate level of teaching and training according to the EBA training guidelines;
- the Examination for European Diploma in Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care (EDA) to raise the standards of the specialty by requiring documentation of professional qualification;
- a National Anaesthesia Society Committee to facilitate and harmonize the activities of national and international societies of anaesthesiologists in European countries (as defined by the World Health Organization).

### European Diploma in Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care

The matter of the EDA had caused some speculation and anxiety. The new Society is fully committed to maintain the provision of a high-quality examination. Its continued success is an integral part of the merger. The previous three organizations have assured a seamless transfer of the Examination Office and its operation from London to the ESA's headquarters in Brussels by the end of last year. The Examination Committee of the new Society will be responsible for running of the EDA. The examinations calendar for 2005 is unaffected. The continuity, quality and standard of the examination are guaranteed. The only evident change is a new examination address.

### National Anaesthesia Societies Committee

The newly formed *National Anaesthesia Societies Committee* (NASC) will provide a close and efficient link between the National Anaesthesia Societies of the European countries and the ESA. This Committee will provide the function of the previous CENSA from within the new Society. Ideally, all European National Anaesthesia Societies will join NASC. This is of great importance on a continent characterized by many different countries, languages, cultures and traditions, with varying anaesthetic practices and philosophies.

Election of NASC members by representatives of the National Societies is almost identical to the previous CENSA. National Anaesthesia Societies will have direct input into NASC through the General Assembly of National Societies and the Advisory Committee of Presidents. The Chairman of NASC is a member of the ESA Board of Directors, so that the interests of the National Anaesthesia Societies are directly represented on the ESA Executive.

Through NASC, the ESA will maintain solidarity with less affluent countries in Europe by supporting programmes like 'East meets West', participating in

National Society meetings, and co-operating with the *Foundation for the European Education in Anaesthesiology* (FEEA) in courses held in former Eastern European countries. In addition, NASC will maintain close contact with the WFSA and with other regional sections of the WFSA. Thus, NASC will provide all functions of the previous CENSA from within the ESA.

### The interim period

An Interim Board of Directors and an Interim ESA Council will steer the new Society in 2005. The *Interim Board of Directors* are the executive members of the previous ESA, EAA and CENSA. From 1 January to 30 May, the President is Hans-Joachim Priebe (DE), Vice-President Thomas Pasch (CH), Secretary George Hall (UK), Assistant Secretary Hugo Van Aken (DE), Treasurer Pedro Amorim (PT) and Assistant Treasurer Jean-Pierre Haberer (FR). For the remainder of the year, offices will be exchanged (President: Thomas Pasch; Vice-President: Hans-Joachim Priebe; Secretary: Hugo Van Aken; Assistant Secretary: George Hall; Treasurer: Jean-Pierre Haberer; Assistant Treasurer: Pedro Amorim). Three officers of the previous CENSA (Philippe Scherpereel, FR; Olav Sellevold, NO; Stephan Trenkler, SK) complete the Interim Board of Directors.

This arrangement will provide a stable management of the new ESA during its first year of existence. In March or April of this year, the Interim Board of Directors will ratify the budget for 2005 and approve the draft annual accounts for 2004. The Board will convene a General Assembly to approve the budget for 2005 and the annual accounts for 2004. At this year's Euroanaesthesia meeting in Vienna, elections will be held for all offices. Newly elected officers will start on 1 January 2006.

The *Interim Council* consists of the previous ESA Council, the previous EAA Senate and the previous CENSA Board. In May of this year, this Council will be asked to ratify the completion of the Amalgamation, and to confirm the interim structure. Elections for the ESA Council for 2 yr from 1 January 2006 will be held towards the end of this year (one representative for any European country which has at least 25 Active Personal ESA Members).

### Outlook

For some this may appear to be the end of an era. However, the full gamut of activities of the previous three organizations will continue without faltering: the annual scientific meeting, the *EJA* as the official journal of the Society, the EDA, the Hospital Visiting Programme, the grants, awards, educational and training programmes, and the close links with the

European National Anaesthesia Societies. Not only will these activities be preserved but they will be provided by a co-ordinated and joined-up system, designed for the purpose, and administered by a professionally managed new Society.

The merger of the ESA, EAA and CENSA leaves organized European anaesthesia looking extremely 'tidy'. From now on, it will be easy for anyone to identify where the heart of European anaesthesiology lies. This should give the new Society an advantage in its dealings with the respective political bodies of the European Union (EU), and make political and financial support from the EU more likely.

It has been recognized by all involved in the amalgamation process that active participation of the best brains in European anaesthesiology is vital for the continued scientific and educational development of the new Society. Of equal importance is the regular turnover of 'heads' to ensure regular refreshment of ideas and styles. Mechanisms have been put in place to ensure both. They include the creation of various new committees with numerous opportunities and responsibilities (e.g. Academics Affairs Committee, Nominations Committee, Finance Committee, etc.) as well as the development of new by-laws that clearly define duties, terms of office and procedures for election of committee members.

So, rather than considering this the end of an era, we should see the start of a new one, and accept the challenge to ensure that progress is sustained and enhanced. This merger is a great step forward, coupled with the opportunity to enhance the professional and academic impact of anaesthesiology in Europe. As previous Presidents of the ESA, the EAA and the CENSA, we are confident that this step will be successful. The new ESA can build on the individual success of the previous three European anaesthesia organizations, for the benefit of anaesthesia across the whole of Europe. In consideration of the past, the present and the future, we feel it is justified to say that 1 January 2005 has been a historic day in European anaesthesiology.

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