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ECR President Prof. Lorenzo Bonomo on the Growth of the ECR and the Role of Management



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This year's elected President of the European Congress of Radiology (ECR), Prof. Lorenzo Bonomo, is Chairman of the Department of Radiology and Director of the Radiology Training Programme at the Catholic University Sacro Cuore in Rome. Here he talks to IMAGING Management about what's in store for attendees at this year's ECR, the increasing importance of management topics and the role of e-learning in encouraging young radiologists.

Please tell us about the path of your involvement with the European Society of Radiology (ESR). When did you first come to be a member, and how did you get more and more involved?

I attended the ECR for the first time in 1991, and I've been a member of the ESR since its foundation in 2005. In 2008, I was nominated member of the congress committee, and started working on the organisational aspects of the annual meetings, which have become increasingly successful. There has been a continuous improvement in the quality of the ECR, both in terms of presentations and of the high standards of its educational and scientific activities. I am extremely honoured to be the President of the congress this year. Today, the ECR is the annual meeting of one of the most relevant medical societies in the world, with more than 52,000 members.

Please tell us also about your involvement with the Italian Society for Radiology, and the links between it and the ESR. Why are these international connections so important for the growth of radiology as a specialty?

I think my appointment as ECR President is also a big recognition of Italian radiology for its huge contribution since the foundation of the ECR, to that society. I became a member of the Italian Society of Medical Radiology (SIRM) in 1976. I also had the honour of being the President of SIRM from 2002 to 2004. During my Presidency, I tried to stimulate the collaboration between SIRM and EAR, the European Association of Radiology, supporting the building up of a common house of European radiology, the ESR. The Italian society has always worked together with the ESR to encourage attendance at the ECR. European countries are very different in terms of population, education and radiological training. A continuous correspondence between the European and national societies is therefore pivotal, if we want to improve the development of radiology at a European level. I think that the ESR will continue to work in this direction.

What are the sessions that one should not miss, at this year's ECR congress?

I wish I could attend every session in the programme, because every session has been organised with great care, by experts in the different topics. Personally, I look forward to the "ESR Meets" sessions and to the interdisciplinary sessions. Besides my home country, Italy, this year's guest countries include Romania and Egypt, the latter being the first ever African guest country at the ECR. The invited partner discipline is actually one of our sister disciplines: radiation oncology. If I were a young radiologist, I wouldn't miss the activities dedicated to the younger generation. Moreover, I would like to attend the EPOS discussion sessions, including the new "trial update" discussion of posters submitted on the days prior to the congress and presenting new studies that will have a certain impact on radiology in the near future. I am confident that these sessions will be very successful, but I look forward to the social events as well, a great occasion to strengthen friendships with as many as possible of the participants.

Participants will need to plan their agenda according to their personal needs and interests. There are such a variety of topics and learning objectives that everybody will find sessions that appeal to them. Young radiologists, in particular, will have a wide range of possibilities among presentations and hands-on workshops. All participants, however, should be encouraged to attend the plenary sessions, the honorary lectures, and the interactive sessions.

Do you believe that management and administrative topics such as healthcare economics, cost-effectiveness and leadership will play a growing role in

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radiology education, and why should radiologists put greater focus on these areas?

An efficient and effective management and administrative organisation is absolutely indispensable for the correct and successful functioning of any medical department, and especially radiological departments. Radiology is a complex discipline, with important budgets, it is constantly evolving and requires flexible and careful management, which pays attention to the patients' needs. Therefore it is necessary that, along with the traditional clinical topics, the training of young radiologists includes topics such as healthcare economics, cost-effectiveness and leadership. Since its foundation, the European Society of Radiology has been very sensitive to such issues. The annual Management in Radiology (MIR) meetings (www.mironline.org) testify to ESR's interest in these topics.

At the recent RSNA congress, there was intense interest and discussion of shrinking healthcare budgets and their potential impact on the radiology workforce. Do you think the deepening economic crisis will make cuts into European radiology as well, for the foreseeable future, and how will this be felt in your opinion?

It is doubtless that the economic crisis being experienced across the entire world, and especially in Europe, will significantly affect radiology. Along with the reduction of investments in new technologies, a reduction in medical and technical personnel is to be feared. Therefore, it is necessary to find and experiment with new organisational models, which allow us to keep up the productivity and quality standards of our institutions. Let's hope that it won't be long before the crisis ends!

How have you managed to balance these extra duties as congress President with your regular scientific and clinical commitments? Why is it important that radiologists get more involved in extra-clinical activities such as these?

It is very important, when you work as a radiologist in your hospital, that you know what is going on in the rest of Europe, and the world. It is also fundamental for a radiologist today to acquire other competencies, such as management know-how and human skills. Being in touch with so many colleagues and with the ESR staff has certainly enhanced my activity as Chair of the department, my work as a radiologist and my personal relationships, since many of the colleagues I have been working with for the ECR 2012 are actually friends. Time is always too short to keep up with all the correspondence, but fortunately technology helps to speed up communication.

Supporting professional development in the younger generation is an essential and important role of more seasoned, experienced radiologists. What does this year's ECR offer to the younger generation?

We will give particular attention and space to young radiologists, who are the promising future of the discipline, and to students, in order to make them acquainted with the beauty and interest of our world and to attract them to radiology. Several initiatives, such as ESR Rising Stars, Junior Interpretation Sessions, the Radiology Trainees Forum and the ESOR session will be dedicated to them. The programme "Invest in the Youth" will continue its highly successful activity. The aim of the programme is to give young radiologists and radiographers in training the chance to participate in the meeting.

ECR is well known for its innovative tools supporting e-learning during the congress. Can you tell our readers a bit more about these?

We have increased the number of interactive sessions this year, because it is a great way for the attendees to participate directly with the speakers. The EPOS section has been slightly modified. EPOS discussion topics will include: "Oncologic Imaging: Response Evaluation", "Ischaemic Heart Disease: CT or MRI?", "Diffusion-Weighted MRI of the Abdomen", "Iterative imaging", "Breast MRI". As I mentioned, there will also be a discussion about what we call "trial update" posters. Selected sessions – such as the opening ceremony, honorary lectures and "ESR meets" sessions – will be broadcast online on the ESR website, thanks to an initiative introduced this year and called "ECR goes to". It will help the congress to reach out to radiologists who would otherwise be unable to benefit from its high quality programme. And all congress presentations will also be available after the congress on the ESR website.

Vienna is well known as one of Europe's foremost cultural city destinations. What does the ECR offer attendees in terms of social and cultural activities this year?

Our poster image for ECR 2012 is a painting by Arcimboldo, an Italian artist who became especially well known throughout Europe after the Austrian Emperor Rudolf II exhibited his paintings in the many residences of the Habsburg imperial family. This choice intends to acknowledge historical and cultural links between Italy and Vienna. The opening lecture will be given by Sylvia Ferino- Padgen, an expert on Arcimboldo with Italian origins, and art gallery Director of the Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna. Thus, the opening ceremony – as usual at ECR – will give attendees a taste of the President's country, yet not only through music. Other events will have an Italian flavour, but I don't want to give away too much, because I don't want to ruin the surprise! In any case, Vienna is such a beautiful city that everybody will enjoy walking in its streets, as well as visiting its museums, during the breaks in the congress.

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