
ESC Congress 2011: Review & Highlights



“The ESC Congress 2011 in Paris has been a record breaking event” said Prof Michael Böhm, chairman of the ESC Congress Programme Committee. “With a total attendance of 32,946 participants, this is our largest congress ever. We are especially pleased to see that more and more delegates are coming from outside Europe. Large delegations came from Brazil, Japan, China and India this year,” said Prof Böhm.

“The quality of the scientific content at the ESC Congress attracts more and more participants each year,” explained Prof Böhm. “The medical community was eagerly waiting to hear about the results of important trials such as ARISTOTLE, Dal-VESSEL AND RUBY-1 which were announced in Paris.”

ARISTOTLE was probably the highlight of this congress as apixaban was shown to be superior to warfarin in the prevention of stroke and systemic embolism in patients with atrial fibrillation. The drug was also associated with less bleeding and lower mortality rates.

Further interesting studies were the PRODIGY trial, which showed that a 6 months dual antiplatelet therapy after stent implantation (drug eluting and bare metal, stable and unstable patients) was as effective as 24 months, and associated with statistically lower bleeding hazards. The EXAMINATION trial, which demonstrated equivalence for a drug eluting stent (everolimus eluting) vs. bare metal stents (cobalt chromium) with respect to hard clinical endpoints but lower stent thrombosis and revascularization rates up to 1 year, was also a highlight of the ESC Congress 2011.

Prof Michel Komajda, President of the European Society of Cardiology, highlighted the fact that 2011 was the year of the registry: “Registries allow us to see if doctors are following guidelines. The PURE registry, for example showed worrying results: patients with previous cardiovascular disease are not receiving adequate treatment. The registry which enrolled 154,000 adults in 17 countries, found that in low income countries, 80 % of cardiac patients received no medication at all, while in high income countries 11, 2% did not receive adequate treatment. There is still progress to make in prevention and treatment all over the world.”

The ESC has launched its own registries. Three of them were presented at ESC Congress 2011: Heart Failure, Atrial Fibrillation Ablation and Pregnancy and Heart Disease. “So far, we had little data on how women with pre-existing heart disease fared during pregnancy. Complications are frequent and may be life threatening. Our registry is the first of the kind and results were worrying as maternal and foetal deaths were higher in this patient set than expected. This registry shows the need for collaboration between gynaecologists and cardiologists in the follow-up of pregnancies in women with heart disease” said Prof Komajda.

New clinical guidelines were also released by the European Society of Cardiology on the management of cardiovascular disease in pregnancy: “Because of the increasing prevalence of heart disease in young women, these guidelines emphasising the need for screening and risk assessment of pregnant women are extremely important,” said Prof Komajda. Other guidelines announced by the ESC include new recommendations on peripheral artery diseases and updated ESC guidelines on the management of non-ST elevation acute coronary syndromes.

The ESC announced that it will extend its EurObservational registry project. New registries will include heart failure, atrial fibrillation and chronic ischaemic heart disease. EuroAspire IV will be launched in 2012 to collect data on epidemiology and risk factors across Europe.

Outside of Hot Lines and Clinical Trial Updates, the media had its favourite studies too. Presentations on the beneficial effects of chocolate on the heart and on the positive effect of laughter on blood vessels were widely reported. On the contrary, other studies confirmed that overtime, job strain and anger are all cardio-toxic. “Increasingly, psychological factors are recognised as playing a major role in triggering heart disease,” said Prof Kurt Huber, chairperson of the ESC Press Committee.

A public event was held on 28 and 29 August in front of the Town Hall in Paris in order to pass on the European Society of Cardiology’s key messages to the public: eat well, don’t smoke, stop stressing and get up and exercise! Cardiologists were present to give advice. Around 3,000 Parisians and tourists visited the different stands and participated in activities such as baby gym, “zumba-fitness” and workshops on healthy cooking.

The ESC Congress is an annual event. Next year, cardiologists and allied professions will meet in Munich, Germany, from 25 to 29 August 2012. The spotlight of this congress is “from bench to practice.”

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