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## ICU Volume 8 - Issue 3 - Autumn 2008 - Congress Preview

### Euroanaesthesia 2008

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The annual scientific of the European Society of Anaesthesiology was held at the Bella Centre in Copenhagen at the end of May this Year.

The congress attracted around 5200 delegates over the 4 days in addition to industrial exhibitions. Similar to most large medical conferences, Euroanaesthesia has numerous parallel components: refresher courses, work-shops, interactive sessions, scientific updates, poster presentations and industrial symposia, not to mention providing the opportunity to visit one of Europe's finest cities.

The ESA prides itself on the high standard of its showpiece congress, and this year was no exception. The various subcommittees of the scientific programme committee, chaired by Professor Jennie Hunter, put together a very high-quality speaking faculty who covered a diverse range of topics. Most of the speakers were European, and Denmark, the host nation, provided a significant number. Many congress attendants would agree that the best talks given are not necessarily those from the biggest names, and I, personally found that the most informative and refreshing sessions came from presentors I hadn't come across before.

Euroanaesthesia is deliberately a general conference covering the whole range of anaesthesia related topics. Within that structure however, the various scientific subcommittees aim to provide sessions to satisfy all anaesthetists whether they are novices, occasional practitioners or dedicated experts in the field.

Unlike the ASA, Euroanaesthesia does not charge additional fees for sessions within the congress. The organisers therefore had to make early predictions on which sessions would be most popular so that room size could be matched to the audience. Although there was an occasional session where delegates had to be turned away, this year it seemed to be less of a problem than previous years. Inevitably with so many parallel sessions, delegates had to make choices about what to miss. Fortunately, following its successful pilot last year, the ESA continued to provide web access to the visual presentation and the sound from the conference room to delegates at the conference. ESA members can have access afterwards as well, which is certainly a useful resource.

A large number of the delegates were able to attend Euroanaesthesia courtesy of the reduced fees available for abstract presenters. 879 abstracts were presented as poster presentations this year. As with any large-scale abstract sessions the standard varies, with some workers presenting full-scale trials, and others presenting small case series and audits. There was something to learn in each session though. Looking at the faces of the presenters, most of them seemed to enjoy their session, at least after they had had their five minutes explaining their work. The poster sessions always feel more multi-cultural with colleagues offering to translate tricky questions in and out of a shared non-English language if the presenters got stuck. This year was better than last year for noise levels. Talking to one of the ESA secretariat staff members, they had listened to delegates comments last year, and deliberately tired to organise the sessions so that disturbance from other sessions was kept to a minimum. The 6 best abstracts were selected for a more traditional oral presentation with prizes for the top three. This year's winner, Rainer Haseneder (Germany) presented his work: 'Xenon Reduces NMDA-Receptor Mediated Synaptic Transmission in the Mouse Amygdala via Postsynaptic Mechanisms and Independent on the NR2A or NR2B Subunit'.

Away from the scientific presentations, delegates spent time browsing the industrial exhibition. More than 100 companies exhibited their latest products in the field of anaesthesiology. All the big names were there, tempting delegates with give-aways, prizes and live demonstrations. The remainder of the exhibition was made up of smaller companies, showcasing their wares. The number of ways of maintaining a patient's airway seems to be going up still, judging by the number of stands. A new addition to the exhibition this year was the ESA village. Sixteen different national societies had signed up to take part in the Village, informing delegates about the activities in their country. At the ESA stand it was also possible to take the European Diploma in Anaesthesia and Intensive Care (EDA) diagnostic test: many delegates took the opportunity to test

their knowledge in anaesthesia, and asked questions of the examiners who were there to help candidates prepare for the exams.

Overall, delegates are positive about Euroanaesthesia. The ESA undertook a survey during the congress, and the results are available to see on the ESA website. Perhaps the most telling figure is that two thirds of delegates come to Euroanaesthesia because of its reputation for a high quality scientific programme.

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