
ICU Volume 5 - Issue 2 - Summer 2005 - Congress Previews

Euroanaesthesia: ESA Annual Scientific Meeting; Vienna May 28-31, 2005

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Dr Drummond previews the philosophy, methods, and content of the coming ESA meeting.

The European Society of Anaesthesiology is a young organisation, born in 1990. It has grown quickly, and a central feature of its success has been an attractive and popular annual Scientific Meeting, Euroanaesthesia. The winning formula has been maintaining a core expertise in the nuts and bolts of running a big scientific meeting, with a permanent Secretariat.

For programme content, we draw on advice and help from clinicians and researchers who are selected from the best of European anaesthesia. These successful annual meetings have grown over the years (figure 1). This growth is starting to limit the choice of centres where the meeting can be held, and a popular city is a vital ingredient for success. This year, the meeting will be held in Vienna, a location that we have used successfully before. The city is easy to reach, attractive, and has a great atmosphere. Coupled with the high reputation of the ESA scientific meeting, this promises to be a great success. In addition, this year represents the culmination of political fusion of all the European bodies associated with anaesthesia, to form a single organisation. The European Academy of Anaesthesiology, which confers a Diploma in Anaesthesiology, and the Confederation of European National Societies of Anaesthesiologists, have now amalgamated with the ESA. This organisation now speaks for anaesthesia with a single voice. The Vienna meeting will represent the first annual meeting of this new unified Society, although there has been a slow fusion over the last three years, with cooperation in the annual meetings.

Such a meeting should reflect the entire range of scientific progress and advancing knowledge in anaesthesia. The content has to be practical and address economic aspects as well as purely scientific themes. An important consideration is that many European anaesthetists also practise intensive care. Our on-site surveys show that certain subjects have an enduring popularity, particularly regional anaesthesia, and there are also important aspects of modern society such as the ageing population, increasing incidence of heart disease, and the increasing demand for evidence based and economic considerations. It's hard to single out specific highlights, since the intention is to have something for everyone. However, there is a large symposium planned on the uses of hypothermia, which is relevant to a number of special areas of anaesthesia, and where considerable development has been seen. It's prudent to plan most of the programme about a year in advance to allow arrangements with speakers, who are often in demand. However there may be "hot topics" that need addressing at shorter notice. This year, for example, we plan a symposium to address features of the sudden withdrawal of the COX-II inhibitor analgesics from the market. Other topics of current relevance are information technology and processing, and practical and organisational aspects of safety.

Features that are always popular include practical sessions with simulation, such as in airway management, and workshops where practitioners can discuss controversial topics and allow the audience to participate.

A conference like this is an important forum for the presentation of current research, using posters and small group presentations. After submission, which is entirely on-line, abstracts are judged by a panel of specialists, using carefully designed, norm-referenced criteria.

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Approximately 70% are accepted for presentation. The poster presentation process is designed to allow discussion and exchange of ideas between workers in the various fields, and can often be rewarding and encouraging, particularly for young researchers. Research is enriched and stimulated by such interchange. In addition, the ESA has set out to encourage first class research by selecting the best of the submissions for separate presentation and judging by a panel of experts, followed by prizes for the best three presentations.

I welcome you to come to Vienna in May and sample the variety and quality that the meeting will provide!

Published on : Wed, 20 Jul 2011