



Chairman's Page



Fausto J. Pinto
Chairman

Dear Colleagues and Friends

It is with great pride and a sense of responsibility that I start the publication of the Chairman's Page in our journal. The WG on Echocardiography has had great developments over the last few years and currently we are already involved in a substantial amount of activities that have transformed our structure from a group of good friends into a professional organization. It is important, however, to keep in mind what our main goals are so we don't deviate from our path. It is our responsibility to improve the quality of life of the European population by reducing the impact of cardiovascular disease and, in our specific case, by improving the education, research and practice of echocardiography across Europe. There are several activities currently going on, but let me focus on the most significant in my view.

EuroEcho 7 — Barcelona, 4–7 December 2003

This is currently the main echo meeting in Europe and is becoming one of the most attended meetings around the world. We will continue to improve and expand it so it will be our cornerstone for education, teaching, scientific presentations, and technological developments in the field of ultrasound in Cardiovascular Medicine.

The program of EuroEcho 7 has been shaped during the last Nucleus meeting, in respect of the main goals that the WG has considered as priorities: education, teaching, and updates in recent scientific and technological developments in the field of cardiovascular ultrasound.

Two special themes have been selected by the WG for this year: Diastolic Function and Congenital

Heart Disease. The ESC Working Group on Ventricular Function will co-host the 3rd European Diastology meeting (held in collaboration with the ESC Educational Committee) and there will be joint sessions with the American Society of Echocardiography (on handheld devices), the Association of European Pediatric Cardiologists (AEPC) and the ESC Working Groups on Grown-up Congenital Heart Disease (GUCHD), Valvular Heart Disease, Peripheral Circulation, Cardiac Rehabilitation and Exercise Physiology, Myocardial and Pericardial Disease. There will also be a special session dedicated to the 50 years of Echocardiography and 150 years after Christian Doppler's death. Continuing the last EuroEcho meeting's successful experiment, on Wednesday, prior to the Opening Ceremony, a meeting on *Stress Echocardiography* will be held in collaboration with the *Working Group on Echocardiography of the Spanish Society of Cardiology*.

In addition, a series of Teaching Courses will be held in parallel prior to the Opening Ceremony. These will feature *Cardiovascular Magnetic Resonance for Echocardiographers* (in conjunction with CMR WG), *Transoesophageal and Perioperative Echocardiography* (in conjunction with EACTA), *Congenital Heart Disease* (in conjunction with GUCHD and AEPC) and *Basic Research in Ultrasound*. All will take place on Wednesday, December 3rd, 8:30 am–4:00 pm, prior to the Opening Ceremony which will begin at 4.30 pm. Following the Opening Ceremony, there will be the General Assembly where all members are invited to go.

The *Eidler lecture* will be given by *Miguel-Angel Garcia Fernandez* (from Madrid) and the *EuroEcho lecture* by *Arthur Weyman* (from Harvard University, Boston).

The successful DICE sessions will continue, where case presentations highlight difficult diagnoses or clinically significant findings. They will be organized by *National Working Groups on Echocardiography* and other *ESC Working Groups*. This year we will also have two non-European DICE sessions organized by Argentina and a set of African countries, continuing our efforts to expand EuroEcho beyond European boundaries.

This year, EuroEcho 7 presents two innovations:

WGE Grants. In order to encourage the participation of young investigators (under 35 years) in the EuroEcho meetings, the WG Nucleus has provided 40 Grants of 500 Euros.

Examination for European Accreditation on Echocardiography. After last year's successful pilot exam in Munich, the WGE has decided, within the ESC framework, to pursue the process of creating a European Accreditation on Echocardiography. Therefore, an exam sub-committee

has been created, chaired by Kevin Fox and involving Nucleus members and representatives from National Societies. This year, we will run the first formal examination, which will take place on Saturday afternoon after the end of the EuroEcho meeting.

The next EuroEcho meetings will be held in Athens/Greece (EuroEcho 8; 2004) and Florence/Italy (EuroEcho 9; 2005).

Accreditation on Echocardiography in Europe

This represents the major new development of the WG during the current leadership. This is a very important issue which is currently being discussed, and in some cases already implemented, across Europe among the different medical disciplines. We undertook the task of developing an accreditation system on echocardiography in Europe. There are several reasons why this should be done, which can be summarized under the concept of improving and guaranteeing the quality of European echocardiography. This will be a purely voluntary procedure and it will be done within the framework of ESC. In order to discuss this process, an Accreditation Committee on Echocardiography was created, which includes representatives of the following national groups/societies which either have an accreditation system already running or underway: France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain, United Kingdom, and Turkey. All other European countries will be consulted in due time and informed on the developments of the process. We had our first meeting on February 1st at the Heart House where we had the chance to discuss several issues, including the different systems already existing, as well as agreeing on a common denominator for a European process. It was also decided to pursue accreditation not only in adult echocardiography, but also on transesophageal echocardiography (in cooperation with our anesthesiology colleagues of EACTA) and pediatric echocardiography (in cooperation with our pediatric cardiologists of AEPC). An examination committee was created to elaborate the exam and Kevin Fox was appointed to chair this committee. In Munich, a pilot exam was administered to a group of colleagues who volunteered to help us develop the exam. Now we are working to have the first official examination this year in Barcelona. In preparation for this exam we will also run for the first time an extramural teaching course in Vienna on the 2nd to 4th of October. This has been organized by the still Chairman of Educational Committee (Frank Flachskampf) and will involve several European colleagues.

In addition, we have already started an official joint committee with European Association of European CardioThoracic Anesthesiologists (EACTA) regarding accreditation on transesophageal echocardiography. A meeting was recently held in Prague, during the EACTA annual meeting, where several issues were discussed and the year 2004 was defined as the possible launching year of the process. A similar joint venture with the Association of European Pediatric Cardiologists (AEPC) is currently being developed.

Evolution to the European Association of Echocardiography (a registered branch of ESC)

As some of you are aware, there have been internal discussions in the ESC on several aspects regarding the functioning of ESC structure, including the creation of Associations evolving from Working Groups, as ours, which have such a set of activities that they need to have a more adequate structure to be able to cope with all the work involved and the challenges that an activity like this imposes. In this regard, a document elaborated by the Board of ESC is currently being discussed, defining the rules for the new Associations. As one of the potential groups to develop into an Association, we have been deeply involved in the discussion and are currently preparing ourselves for this move. It is important to highlight the fact that this step represents an important progress, giving us the opportunity to develop further our aims and goals, within the European Society of Cardiology.

The European Journal of Echocardiography

The link between EuroEcho and EJE was fundamental for the initial steps of the journal. It proved to be a wise decision since the journal is thriving, with its inclusion in Index Medicus and shortly with an Impact Factor. In order to keep it on the road, we have just decided at the nucleus to extend the link of the Journal with EuroEcho, therefore all paying registrants will get the journal for 1 year. This represents an important financial commitment by the WG, particularly because from 2004 there will be six issues/year instead of the current four issues. This is the main reason why we will have to increase the registration fee for EuroEcho, which was kept the same over the last 2 years.

These are some of the issues I would like to keep you informed on, but other aspects of our organization will be discussed in future issues. Meanwhile..., all the best to all of you.