

6th N-ECCO Network Meeting

The Nurses Network Meeting took place on Thursday, February 16 as part of the 7th Congress of ECCO, held in Barcelona.

This was once again a one-day event for nursing colleagues across Europe and even beyond. The programme was based on requests for specific subjects relevant to IBD nursing, which were written on evaluation forms by delegates attending the previous N-ECCO Network Meeting in Dublin. The talks were given by both nursing and medical invited speakers. The programme was divided into three sessions. The first was entitled "Understanding disease management", which was followed after the lunch break by a session entitled "Issues affecting quality of life in people with IBD". The third session, "Comparing and sharing nursing practice", concluded the 6th N-ECCO Network Meeting for this year. This session has become a permanent feature at the meeting due to popular demand.



The meeting was opened with a welcoming word from ECCO Education Officer, Dr Janneke van der Woude, and N-ECCO Chair, Marian O'Connor. The first session, chaired by Marian O'Connor (United Kingdom) and Rina Assulin (Israel), began with an interesting and useful talk by Dr Franck Carbonnel (France) on what every nurse should know about immunomodulators in IBD. This was followed by a tandem talk presented by Dr Yves Panis (France) and Lisa Younge (United Kingdom) during which Lisa reminded us of the psychological impact of having fistulae and Dr Panis explained the medical and surgical treatment options. Mary Hamzawi (Ireland) gave the next talk, which addressed the need to prepare adolescents for the transition to adult services; she discussed the barriers to a successful transition and suggested initiatives to improve the transition. In a presentation on diagnostics in IBD, Dr Julian Panés (Spain) stressed the importance of early diagnosis of IBD and relapse and provided a clear overview of diagnostic strategies used to assess the level of disease activity in Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis. This was followed by a talk by Dr Janneke van der Woude (The Netherlands) discussing fertility and the management of IBD during pregnancy. Janneke included detailed information about the safety of medication during pregnancy and lactation, a subject of major importance to our IBD patients. Before the lunch break the three best abstracts were presented, two of which came from Spanish nurses and one from Ireland. In total, 11 abstracts were submitted for the N-ECCO Network Meeting, and the remaining eight were all presented as posters.

The second session, chaired by Patricia Détré and Lisa Younge, consisted of four 20-minute talks, each concerning a matter affecting quality of life in those suffering from IBD. Tineke Markus, chair of the Netherlands IBD patient association, reported on a



nationwide survey held in the Netherlands concerning labour participation rates of IBD patients. The results showed that people with IBD worked full-time less often than those without IBD but that the proportion in employment was the same as in the general population. This was followed by a talk on fatigue by Laurant Vogelaar, also from the Netherlands. Laurant is involved in research into the effect of psychological interventions in the management of fatigue, and he suggested that we aid our patients by providing education, address adherence to maintain remission, provide an exercise programme and instigate solution-focussed therapy. Dr Andreas Sturm (Germany) discussed clearly the effects of smoking in Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis and encouraged us to support our patients in giving up smoking. He emphasised that anti- TNF therapy is less effective in Crohn's Disease patients who are smokers. The session ended with a talk by Rina Assulin (Israel) on body image and sexuality. She advised us to consider sexuality as an important concern and to use communication skills to bring this issue to the surface when talking to our patients.

In the third and last session, again chaired by Lisa and Patricia, Marika Huovinen from Finland, Antonio Torrejón Herrera from Spain and Matteo Martinato from Italy each presented a 10-minute talk on their experience with IBD telephone advice/help lines. This was followed by a presentation by Marian O'Connor, who summarised the similarities and the differences in nursing practice regarding IBD advice lines. Most communications via the advice lines



appeared to be common practice. The main differences were the level of decision making and the method of documentation (electronic or paper). Marian then provided all present with the news that N-ECCO is about to commence on an exciting project to produce consensus statements which will define IBD nursing practice within Europe. More information on this is available via the N-ECCO National Representatives. Before the meeting was closed by Marian, Janette Gaarenstroom (The Netherlands) communicated a short impression of the 1st Post N-ECCO Meeting, which was held in the Netherlands in September 2011 and was aimed at sharing knowledge gained with those unable to attend N-ECCO and at the same time to promote (N)-ECCO activities.

The N-ECCO Committee would like to sincerely thank all who contributed to the 6th N-ECCO Network Meeting and especially the speakers for their interesting and informative presentations. We also thank the 222 nurses from 22 countries who attended the meeting and hope to see all of you again next year. We shall be studying the evaluation forms and utilising your suggestions in our preparations for the 7th N-ECCO Network Meeting in Vienna.

We are already looking forward to it!

Do come to (N)-ECCO again... and bring a friend!

JANETTE GAARENSTROOM

N-ECCO Committee Member