

UEMS Division of Neuroradiology—a new development for European neuroradiology

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UEMS—European Union of Medical Specialists—is a lobby and consulting organisation representing physicians trained in a medical speciality in all those countries that are members of the European Union—EU.

UEMS is organised in sections, each medical speciality represented by a section. To have a section in UEMS is equal to being a recognised medical speciality in Europe. There are sections of radiology, neurosurgery and neurology, just to mention a few pertinent specialities. The Section chairmen are members of a General Assembly of UEMS and the Council of UEMS is the executive committee of the organisation.

The Council of UEMS took, for European Neuroradiology, a very important decision in Bratislava on October 12th 2007 when it approved the proposal of organising a “Division of Neuroradiology”. This was unanimously supported by the UEMS Section of Radiology when it met in Vienna during ECR in March of 2008. In an inaugural meeting in Brussels on September 13th 2008, the “Division of Neuroradiology” was

formed. The officers of the Division were elected and as the first President of this division Professor Olof Flodmark from Stockholm was elected. Professor Massimo Gallucci from Italy was elected as General Secretary and Professor Peter Barsi of Hungary as Treasurer. Neuroradiology is, to this date, the only division formed within the “family” of Radiology.

It has been a long sought goal for Neuroradiology to become represented in UEMS and to be recognised as a defined body of knowledge, speciality or at least as a super speciality within the family of Radiology. The process that ended with the inauguration of the Division of Neuroradiology into UEMS in September 2008 started in the Executive Committee of European Society of Neuroradiology—ESNR—in the year of 1998. At this time neurology showed a significant interest in including Neuroradiology as a subspeciality of clinical Neurology [1]. The same year a proposal from ESNR to EAR, European Association of Radiology, to allow Neuroradiology to be represented in UEMS within the family of Radiology, was turned down. Professor Pierre Lasjaunias wrote in 1998 and 1999, during his presidency of ESNR, the first documents outlining a project with the outline of training in Neuroradiology [2] and later the expressed goal of making Neuroradiology represented in UEMS. Professor Lasjaunias wrote: “It is now crucial for our specialty to be actively represented together with neurology and neurosurgery at the UEMS.” [3] The work continued in several seminars during the presidency of Olof Flodmark and in January 2002, the European Board of Neuroradiology—EBNR—was formed.

EBNR was deliberately formed on the pattern of a section of UEMS in order to create an organisation that would be possible to transform, with as little effort as possible, into a section or division of UEMS. Thus EBNR established committees for accreditation, audit, certifica-

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tion, MME/CPD, examination and training. The first issue was to develop the European Course of Neuroradiology—ECNR—into a 4 weeks long course in order to comply with the standards of theoretical training included in the charter of training for most specialities. Thus the new concept of ECNR was created and the course changed from an annual course in a 3-year cycle to a 2-year cycle with two courses annually with a written examination after each course. Thus it became possible to complete 4 weeks of theoretical training of in 2 years time. Under the Presidency of Olof Flodmark, EBNR further developed standards for accreditation of training centres and created the European Qualification Examination in Neuroradiology—EQNR. This oral examination was open to those neuroradiologists who had completed the full cycle of ECNR, passed the written examinations and spent some more time in clinical Neuroradiology. This examination, although without any formal recognition, has been quite popular and 37 European Neuroradiologists has a diploma of EQNR, issued by ESNR and EBNR, on their office wall.

EBNR, together with ESNR, also developed standards of training for diagnostic Neuroradiology later approved by World Federation of Neuroradiological Societies—WFNRS. Similar standards for interventional Neuro-radiology were developed together with representatives from World Federation of Interventional and Therapeutic Neuroradiology—WFITN, the latter also accepted by UEMS section of Neurosurgery and European Association of Neurosurgery—EANS and WFNRS. This important work was indeed a prerequisite for the acceptance of Neuroradiology in UEMS. We also met in the past with the greatest understanding in the other neurodisciplines, which regularly invited representatives of the ESNR to attend their UEMS section meetings. We especially have to thank Professor H. Reulen and Professor W. Grishold, Presidents of the Section of Neurosurgery and Neurology respectively.

The final steps on the road to become a Division of Neuroradiology were taken during the ESNR Presidency of Professor M. Schumacher together with the Section of Radiology in UEMS where the President, Professor Peter Pattynama, supported the creation of subspecialities within the “family” of Radiology. European Neuroradiology is in much debt to the foresight and flexibility exercised by the current representatives of Radiology in UEMS and Europe but also to the Section of Neurosurgery that supported our endeavour all the way.

The mission statement says that “UEMS shall continuously maintain and develop the entire spectrum of professional interests of European medical specialists, with

special emphasis on assuring the highest level of professional autonomy allowing medical specialists to ensure the highest possible quality of healthcare services for the benefit of all European citizens.”

The power and importance of UEMS can be exemplified with the newly announced Directive of Electro magnetic radiation (Directive 2004/40/EC) which, if passed, would effectively have prevented the performance of diagnostic MRI in many patients. The lobbying carried out by the “Alliance for MRI” with the UEMS Section of Radiology supported by the Scientific Societies of Radiology and Medical Physicists in Europe, effectively blocked this directive and it was returned to the drawing board.

UEMS is an organisation with a political agenda. The mode of operation is that of democracy. Each section and division consists of an “assembly” to which each member country of EU shall appoint delegates. The delegate represents Neuroradiology in their own country. Delegates to the Division will be elected and proposed by the national Neuroradiological Societies and then approved by the national association that is a full member of UEMS, usually the National medical association, before taking a seat and vote in the Division of Neuroradiology.

To have achieved the goal of forming a Division of Neuroradiology may be one of the most important events in the history of European Neuroradiology. The “Division of Neuroradiology” effectively provides Neuroradiology with a “face and voice” in Brussels. We are now recognised as a radiological speciality defined by a training programme and a body of knowledge that is specific for Neuroradiology. The “Division of Neuroradiology” is the first recognised speciality within Radiology and it is also made clear that the Division of Neuroradiology in UEMS encompasses both diagnostic and interventional Neuroradiology. It is a great challenge to have been charged with the task to start this work as great expectations are attached to the opportunity presented with the “UEMS Division of Neuroradiology”!

Conflict of interest statement We declare that we have no conflict of interest.

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