

Minute of the informal meeting between

EBCOG and EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO

Novotel Les Halles, Paris, 29 January 2000

Chair: Professor W.Künzel, President EBCOG

**Present: Professor J.W.Wladimiroff, Vice-President EBCOG
Professor A.Van Assche, Secretary-General EBCOG & Section
Professor J.Lansac, Chair EBCOG Training and Assessment
Working Party
Professor L.Cabero-Roura, President EAPM
Professor T.Maggino, President ESGO
Professor B.Tarlatzis, President ESHRE**

Professor Künzel began by welcoming all the participants and he thanked all those present for attending such an important meeting. He thanked Professor Lansac for having organised the meeting and Professor Van Assche who has worked hard to prepare it.

EBCOG and UEMS – what are they and what is their relationship?

The Secretary-General of EBCOG and of the UEMS Section of Ob/Gyn explained that the European Board and College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology - EBCOG - is the Board of the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Section of the Union Européenne des Médecins Spécialistes (UEMS).

Professor Van Assche went on to explain that UEMS is an organisation which acts as a channel giving medical specialists a direct point of contact with the European Commission. UEMS is divided into “Sections” which are made up of different specialties. Currently there are 34 Sections since each of the recognised specialties in Europe has a Section. The members of each Section are made up of representatives appointed by the national organisations of each specialty. Each national organisation appoints 2 delegates to the Section.

Union Européenne des Médecins Spécialistes – a brief history

UEMS was set up on 20 July 1958 – a year after the Treaty of Rome was signed. Thanks to its founders and through the impetus given by the French gynaecologist, Jacques Courtois, its first President and by the Belgian ORL Oscar Godin, Secretary-General, UEMS soon established contact with the relevant authorities of the EEC and defined the basic principles of training for European medical specialists.

The first priority of UEMS was to tackle the issue of the quality of specialist training and its objective was to try to develop, via the European Commission and the member States, comparable high-level training programmes for specialist trainees in the six Common Market countries.

In 1962 UEMS created Specialist Sections for each of the main disciplines practiced in the Member States. These Sections were made up of groups of experts appointed by the national associations of the specialties concerned and they worked to co-ordinate and harmonise specialist training. UEMS and its Sections developed their activities in co-operation with the Standing Committee of European Doctors, created in 1959 and the first European Directives concerning doctors (which came into force in 1975) were, to a large extent, inspired by the proposals and surveys made by UEMS and its Specialist Sections.

The successive enlargement of the European Union led to important changes in the structure and statutes of UEMS and to the number of Specialist Sections, which increased to 34.

The European Commission then created an Advisory Committee on Medical Training. This is a Community institution which ensures the link between European professional medical organisations, universities and national governments on the one hand and the European Commission on the other. UEMS immediately developed close relations with this new body, which during the period 1980-1981 successively consulted with all the Specialist Sections of UEMS. Each Section submitted a report outlining its opinions and proposals as to how the specialty should evolve. This consultation, carried out on the initiative of UEMS led to the publication of the second and third reports and recommendations of this committee concerning the training of medical specialists.

Finally, in the nineties, the European "Boards" were created. The Boards are essentially the think-tanks or engines of the Specialist Sections, working to develop optimal care in the field of the specialty concerned by raising the quality of training of medical specialists in the EU to the highest possible level. In essence, the Sections tend to be mainly professional in nature, whilst the Boards are more academic. A Board must channel its proposals, recommendations etc., via its Section and thus the relationship between a Board and its Section is extremely important.

UEMS Officers

On 23 October, 1999 the UEMS Management Council elected its new executive committee for the next 3 years. The officers are:

President: C.Twomey, Geriatrician, Ireland
Secretary-General: C.C.Leibbrandt, Otolaryngologist, the Netherlands
Liason Officer: L.P.Harvey, Gynaecologist, United Kingdom
Treasurer: J-Cl.Schaack, Paediatrician, Luxembourg.

The European Board and College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (EBCOG)

EBCOG began in 1996 as a fusion between the European Board of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (EBGO) and the European College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (ECOG). Based in Brussels, Belgium, EBCOG is an organisation made up of 25 countries. Its objective is to improve the health of women and their babies by promoting the highest possible standards of care in all European countries.

Delegates are appointed to the Board by national societies of O & G. Each national society appoints two delegates, one of whom must also be a delegate to the Section of Ob/Gyn.

EBCOG Executive Committee 2000

President: W.Künzel (Germany)
Vice-President: J.W.Wladimiroff (The Netherlands)
Treasurer: W.Dunlop (United Kingdom)
Secretary-General: F.A.Van Assche (Belgium)
R.Kirschner (Norway)
L.Kovacs (Hungary)
I.Milsom (Sweden)
Z.Novak-Antolic (Slovenia)
H.H.Wagner (Denmark)

The Working Parties of the European Board and College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology

Within EBCOG are a number of Working Parties, which consist of members from different countries. These individuals have expertise that is relevant to the interests of each Working Party.

These Working Parties are a driving force in EBCOG and produce proposals and recommendations that are presented to the full EBCOG Council for discussion. If agreed these recommendations must be ratified and adopted by the National Societies for implementation.

1. Working Party on Training and Assessment. Chair: J.Lansac (France).
2. Working Party on Examination and Diploma. Chair: A.Van Assche (Belgium).
3. Working Party on CME. Chair: W.Dunlop (United Kingdom)
4. Committees
 - 4.1 Hospital Recognition Committee (HRC). Chair: J.W.Wladimiroff (Netherlands).

Collaboration between EBCOG, EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO

What is the current situation?

In Rome in November 1999, the Section of Ob/Gyn agreed to ask UEMS to recognise the three subspecialties of Materno-Foetal medicine, Reproductive Medicine and Gynaecological Oncology and also to recognise that these three subspecialties were in the hands of the European Association of Perinatal Medicine, European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology and the European Society for Gynaecological Oncology. UEMS has approved and recognised this request. Therefore the Section has formally recognised these subspecialist societies and agreed that collaboration with them should be done via EBCOG. The Presidents of EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO each indicated that he accepted and agreed to the recognition of his society by and its integration into, EBCOG.

Professor Van Assche pointed out that whilst the Council of EBCOG is composed of representatives of national societies of O & G, the Subspecialist Societies are supra-national. Therefore, it was agreed that whilst representatives of EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO should be invited to EBCOG Executive and Council meetings, they would not be eligible to vote.

What are the potential benefits of closer collaboration?

i) Consolidating and protecting the discipline of Ob/Gyn

The President of EBCOG stated that whilst EBCOG, EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO are, naturally, autonomous, together they would be better able to influence European practice and work towards our common goal of improving women's health. He pointed out that it would also enable EBCOG and the subspecialist societies to consolidate and protect the discipline of Ob/Gyn and its boundaries, whilst at the same time supporting interdisciplinary communication. Together EBCOG, EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO can make joint proposals on issues affecting the specialty and subspecialties of Ob/Gyn.

ii) CME

The President of EBCOG emphasised that this is an excellent time to forge closer links as UEMS is developing an accreditation system for CME and a policy plan for the future. Together we can make joint, mutually beneficial proposals for the future. It was suggested that closer collaboration with EBCOG and the Section would also be useful to the subspecialist societies as it would give them, via EBCOG and therefore via UEMS, a more direct influence on EU health policy.

iii) Greater harmonisation of subspecialties in Europe

The Vice-President of EBCOG also made the point that there is currently little European harmonisation with regard to subspecialties i.e., in the Netherlands subspecialties are not recognised. He said that closer collaboration could lead to more widespread

harmonisation of subspecialties in Europe (whilst recognising that under the EU principle of subsidiarity, recognition remains the responsibility of national health authorities) and also help to open up the exchange of trainees between European departments of O & G.

iv) Creating Recognised Training Programmes and Centres in Materno-Foetal Medicine, Gynaecological Oncology and Reproductive Medicine

EBCOG has produced a recommended Postgraduate Training Programme in O & G that has gone to European level, via UEMS. EBCOG and EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO have already worked together to develop draft training programmes in their three subspecialist areas.

EBCOG has a Hospital Recognition Committee which Visits Departments of O & G and, either makes recommendations or awards a Certificate of Accreditation. The objective of this process is to share experience and to raise the standard of specialist training in Europe. Together, EBCOG, EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO can continue to develop training programmes, create standards, identify and accredit units of excellence, develop CME guidelines for professional and clinical practice and create recognised training centres in these subspecialties.

The issue of numbers of specialists and subspecialists at national level was raised. The Secretary-General of EBCOG made the point that together EBCOG, EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO can look at and analyse the numbers of general obstetricians and gynaecologists and of subspecialists needed in different European countries.

The President of ESHRE said that it was vital that together the subspecialist societies and EBCOG develop a structured and mutually beneficial relationship. The Presidents of EAPM and ESHRE agreed to discuss their relationship with EBCOG with their own Executive Committees. The President of ESGO told the meeting that ESGO has already agreed to closer collaboration with EBCOG and the Section.

What is the next step?

A Draft Contract of Collaboration between EBCOG, EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO

It was agreed during the meeting that a draft Contract of Collaboration be produced which would outline and clarify the areas and bases of co-operation between these organisations.

The President of EBCOG proposed the following headings:

1. Business Meetings
2. European Congress
3. CME
4. Visiting
5. Evidence Based Medicine

6. Scientific Publications
7. Training and Assessment
8. Public Relations

(Please note that the order of these headings does not reflect their priority). The meeting discussed the topics widely and it was generally agreed that a discussion of details should be left for the future, after a draft Contract has been drawn up as a discussion document.

1. Business Meetings

It was proposed that the Presidents or Secretaries-General of EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO would always be invited to EBCOG Council and Executive meetings and to Section Council meetings and should always receive the Minutes of these meetings. As supra national organisations, the representatives of the subspecialist societies would not be entitled to vote.

It was proposed that the Presidents or Secretaries-General of the Section and EBCOG be invited to the Executive and Council minutes of EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO and should receive the Minutes of these meetings. It was agreed that the travel and accommodation costs of the representatives of the subspecialist societies should be met by the subspecialist societies and those of EBCOG members should be met by EBCOG.

2. European Congress

The President of EBCOG explained that the European Congress is Congress that is jointly run by EBCOG and by the European Association of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians (EAGO). He explained that there is a proposal that these two bodies will merge and that 2003 has been identified as the target date. EBCOG and EAGO have a Joint Scientific Committee which is responsible for the scientific content of the annual European Congresses. The Vice-President of EBCOG explained that a big part of these Congresses is the pre or post Congress postgraduate training courses. It was proposed that EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO each run a postgraduate training course on their subspecialty at the 2000 European Congress in Basel.

Discussion followed on the timing of the European Congress and the subspecialist Congresses.

- The President of EAPM explained that EAPM runs a Congress every two years. The next one is 2000 and is in Porto. EAPM usually hold their Congresses during the first two weeks of June.
- The President of ESHRE explained that ESHRE runs an annual Congress around the last week of June. These Congresses begin on Sunday and end on Wednesday.

- The President of ESGO explained that ESGO runs a Congress every two years alternating the year with EAPM. The Congresses are normally held around the end of April or the first week in May and the next one is planned for 2001.

The Presidents of EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO agreed that their organisations would run postgraduate courses at future European Congress but pointed out that the issue of the timing of Congresses needed to be borne in mind. There was some discussion on the introduction of some sort of evaluation system for Congresses where participants evaluate the Congress, the courses and the speakers. It was proposed that EBCOG, EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO should jointly look at the setting up of guidelines on Congress evaluation and also at Congress syllabuses.

Congress organisers

It was agreed that the question of how Congress organisers for the European Congress might be selected would be further discussed in future.

3. CME

There was agreement from all those present that EBCOG, EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO should work together on this issue. The Secretary-General of EBCOG proposed that this should involve developing guidelines and exploring how UEMS could be lobbied on this matter. It was also proposed that EBCOG could recognise/accredit CME courses so that there would be a European level of recognition even if there was no recognition at national level. EBCOG has a Working Party on CME that is in the process of preparing a questionnaire. The President of ESHRE told the meeting that ESHRE would send all the information on its Scientific programme Courses to EBCOG and proposed that EBCOG evaluates the programme and determines the level of credits.

4. Visiting (Hospital Recognition)

The President of EBCOG explained that EBCOG's Hospital Recognition Committee organises visits to Departments of O & G to look at and either accredit or make recommendations on the organisation of and facilities for training in O & G. He explained that the visiting process is one which is central to the work of EBCOG and that the number of Visits carried out annually is growing steadily. It is a process intended to provide a European-wide benchmark for the quality assessment of specialist training in Obstetrics and Gynaecology and it makes a significant contribution to harmonising the standard of specialist training in Europe. Visiting enables both the Departments visited and EBCOG itself to get a good overview of what is happening within specialist training in Europe. We have also found that the Visit reports can be invaluable to those departments visited which need to make a strong, political or administrative case for health service reform to national or regional authorities.

Currently, however, visits do not cover subspecialist training and the Presidents of the subspecialist societies proposed that their societies collaborate with EBCOG in order to

prepare guidelines for visits intended to focus on subspecialist training and criteria for accreditation in subspecialist training. It was also proposed that together EBCOG, EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO should establish an interim body which will decide on the recognition and accreditation of subspecialist training, as some subspecialties are not yet recognised at national level.

5. **Evidence Based Medicine**

The meeting defined Evidence Based Medicine as follows: sufficient proof of the efficiency and efficacy of different diagnostic procedures. It was agreed that it should be made clear in the Contract of Collaboration that co-operation between EBCOG, EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO should be directed towards producing « standards of good care ». It was agreed that this is a complex issue that can be further developed at a later stage, but that it should be written into the Contract.

6. **Scientific Publications**

Three types of publication were identified for discussion:

- Documents such as the EBCOG Log Book ;
- Journals of O & G ;
- Books.

The « European Journal of Obstetrics, Gynaecology and Reproductive Biology » is the Journal of EBCOG and each of the subspecialist societies has its own Journal or Journals which are listed below. Please note that the impact rating is marked next to the Journals

- The Journal of EAPM is the « Journal of Perinatology »
- The Journals of ESHRE are « Human Reproduction » (1), « Molecular Human Reproduction » (2) and « Human Reproduction Update » (3).
- ESGO has the « European Journal of Gynaecological Oncology » (1), the « CME Journal of Gynaecological Oncology » (2) and produces a Newsletter three times per year.

It was agreed that a highly pro-active editor and high quality scientific articles are the most important factors in raising a Journal's circulation. It was agreed that a list should be made detailing the impact factors of O & G Journals and subspecialist O & G Journals and that EBCOG, EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO should link together to improve the standard and raise the impact factors of these Journals.

7. **Training and Assessment Working Party**

7.1 Subspecialist Training Programmes

Discussion began on the Subspecialist Training Programmes which had been developed by EBCOG and the subspecialist societies. Professor Tarlatzis informed the meeting that ESHRE has now approved the Training Programme on Reproductive Medicine.

The definition of a subspecialist was discussed in detail and there was general agreement that a subspecialist should practice one subspecialty to the exclusion of general obstetrics and gynaecology and of all other subspecialties. It was agreed that this definition be included in the Subspecialist Training Programmes and that some thought be given to the continuity of patient care. The Secretary-General reminded participants that Professor Carlos Freire de Oliveira has calculated that 15 – 20% of all obstetricians and gynaecologists will need to be subspecialists in the future.

Professor de Oliveira has produced the following estimates about Portugal:

- 3 – 5 training centres are necessary per 10.000.000 inhabitants
- 40 Gynaecological Oncologists are necessary per 10.000.000 inhabitants
- 3 – 5 Fellows are necessary for 10.000.000 inhabitants

A number of proposals were made about the Subspecialist Training Programmes and were noted by the Chair of the Training and Assessment Working Party. The amended versions are attached to these Minutes. The Presidents of the subspecialties agreed to discuss these Training Programmes with their own Societies and to report back to the EBCOG and Section Councils later this year. The Secretary-General of EBCOG and the Section agreed to speak to the Secretary-General of UEMS about these Training Programmes so that they can be formally recognised by UEMS before the end of 2000.

7.2 Log Book

It was agreed that the Log Book for trainees should be simplified. The Chair of the Training and Assessment Working Party agreed to contact ENTOG who have not yet responded with their proposals. It was agreed that there would be a meeting of this Working Party on Sunday 12 of March in Brussels, directly following the EBCOG Executive meeting and that the EBCOG Administrator would inform all the Working Party members about this. It was agreed that after the general Log Book had been finalised, EBCOG, EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO would work together to produce Log Books for Subspecialist Training.

Proposals were made concerning the existing Log Book and the Chair of the Training and Assessment Working Party has made the necessary modifications. The amended version of the Log Book is attached to these Minutes. It was agreed that this Log Book must be finalised at the next Council meeting of EBCOG and a proposal was made that it could then be put onto the EBCOG Home Page for trainees to download. Participants agreed to send comments to the Chair of the Working Party, Professor Lansac.

8. Public Relations

8.1 Home Pages

The Secretary-General proposed that the Home Pages of EBCOG, EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO should contain links to each other. The address of the various Home Pages are as follows:

EBCOG: <http://www.kuleuven.ac.be/ebcog/Intro.htm>

ESGO: www.esgo.com

EAPM: www.krenet.it/A/EAPM/welcome.htm

ESHRE: www.eshre.com

For information, other web sites of interest are:

UEMS

<http://www.uems.be>

European Association of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (EAGO)

www.eago.org

European Network of Trainees in O & G (ENTOG)

<http://www.med.uni-giessen.de/entog>

8.2 Brochure

The Secretary-General explained that Wyeth was prepared to sponsor an EBCOG Brochure and to explore the possibility of sponsoring the EBCOG Web Site.

8.3 Exchange of information

It was agreed that the Contract should contain an agreement that EBCOG, EAPM, ESHRE & ESGO should all exchange Newsletters, Minutes of meetings and home page addresses.

The President of EBCOG thanked all the participants for having attended this meeting and said that confidential Minutes of the meeting would be circulated within 14 days and a draft Contract of Collaboration would be circulated to all those present shortly afterwards for consultation.