

## ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES

# Organizational Update From the European Stroke Organisation

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**M**ore than ever, the European Stroke Organisation (ESO) represents the Voice of Stroke in Europe. Disparities in the level of stroke care across Europe along with progress in almost every field of stroke research have become a driving force for ESO activities. Meanwhile, the society has set clear priorities.

### GUIDELINES

Building on the success of its conferences, educational events, and new journal and in light of an ever-growing community, ESO recently decided to invest in strengthening its guidelines. The latest development in this regard was a Webinar on May 11 in which 4 new guidelines were presented along with ESO's new web-based platform for convenient access and daily use (<https://eso-stroke.org/guidelines/eso-guideline-directory/>). Among the topics covered by the new ESO guidelines are covert small vessel disease, space-occupying brain infarction, management of carotid stenosis, and blood pressure management in acute ischemic stroke and intracerebral hemorrhage. These guidelines add to others released in early 2021 on the management of transient ischemic attack and intravenous thrombolysis for acute ischemic stroke. ESO guidelines are done according to the Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation system. The working groups have broad representation from experts across Europe and are coordinated by Guillaume Turc (France) and Simona Sacco (Italy) who are pursuing this with enormous energy. Overall, ESO currently offers >30 guidelines with several additional guidelines in the pipeline to be published in 2021.

### ESO CONFERENCE

ESO's annual conferences have become a truly international event presenting frontline results from major clinical trials along with cutting-edge stroke research and educational activity to a wide audience including allied health care professionals. The growth of this conference has been beyond expectations with the number of delegates rising from about 2,700 in 2015 to almost 5,700 in 2019. Due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, this year's conference will, for a second time, be held as a fully virtual event. Still, participants can expect an excellent program with first class science, multiple new elements including interactive sessions, and an even more modern look. As in the past, this year's ESO conference (chair: Joanna Wardlaw, United Kingdom) will feature rising stars and emerging topics including technology and convene scientists from around the globe. ESO liaises with partnering societies such as the European Academy of Neurology, European Society of Minimally Invasive Neurological Therapy, and European Society of Neuroradiology, but partnership with other international stroke societies remains an integral element of its overall strategy. Venues for 2022 (Lyon) and 2023 (Munich) have been chosen with rotations into other European cities planned for 2024 and the following years.

### EUROPEAN STROKE JOURNAL

Thanks to the outstanding leadership of its editor in chief, Bo Norrving, and its vice editors, Didier Leys and Karin Klijn, the *European Stroke Journal* has, within <4

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years, become a prime outlet for all aspects of clinical stroke research ranging from prevention and prehospital care to rehabilitation and life after stroke. The *European Stroke Journal*, currently published quarterly, was listed in PubMed in 2019 and is the primary outlet for the ESO guidelines. All performance metrics are steadily improving such that ESO expects its journal to rapidly attract an even broader community of researchers and clinicians.

## STROKE ACTION PLAN FOR EUROPE

Led by Hanne Christensen, Francesca Romana Pezzella, and Arlene Wilkie, the Stroke Action Plan for Europe emerged from more than a year of preparatory work and was set up with the aim of achieving several key goals by 2030: (1) reduce the absolute number of strokes in Europe by 10%; (2) treat 90% of all patients with stroke in Europe in a stroke unit as the first level of care; (3) have national plans for stroke encompassing the entire chain of care in place; and (4) fully implement national strategies for multisectorial public health interventions promoting and facilitating a healthy lifestyle and reducing environmental (including air pollution), socioeconomic and educational factors that increase the risk of stroke. The Stroke Action Plan for Europe was formally launched in the EU Parliament on May 23, 2018, and is pursued in close collaboration with the Stroke Alliance for Europe (<https://actionplan.eso-stroke.org/>). Key implementation steps are underway, including a series of consultation meetings with stakeholders across Europe, identification and mobilization of national leaders and stroke support organizations, development of a website with a portal for continuous measurement of national-level key performance indicators, and development of educational and support materials. An important step was the formal accreditation of ESO by the World Health Organisation as a recognized nonstate actor in 2020.

## ESO STROKE UNIT AND STROKE CENTER CERTIFICATION PLATFORM

The ESO Stroke Unit and Stroke Center Certification platform is another measure to improve the quality of patient care across Europe by reducing variation in clinical processes. It provides a benchmarking system for quality of stroke management and provides an objective assessment of clinical excellence. Key features of the certification criteria include the availability of trained personnel, diagnostic equipment, acute treatment, and collaboration with other stroke caregivers. To date, 32 stroke units and 46 stroke centers in 11 countries have been certified by ESO, after undergoing thorough review by external auditors and the ESO Stroke Unit Committee.

## EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Educational activities are coordinated by Alastair Webb, United Kingdom, and the ESO Education Committee. The ESO European Society of Minimally Invasive Neurological Therapy Stroke Winter School is organized yearly in Bern, Switzerland, targets pairs of trainee stroke physicians/neurologists and interventional neuroradiologists, and aims to improve multidisciplinary acute stroke care. The ESO Edinburgh Stroke Research Workshop is a 3-day intensive and interactive research workshop organized in Edinburgh, United Kingdom, aiming to guide junior researchers shape an idea into a 2-page research proposal and fundable project. The ESO Summer School is organized yearly as a 1-week course in different cities in Europe aimed at junior clinical trainees and researchers.

The ESO electronic platform (eSTEP)—an interactive educational platform—will be a repository for lectures and webinars and will be launched in the second half of 2021. From 2022, ESO will, in collaboration with the University of Bern, Switzerland, offer a Stroke Masters program. The program is a part-time course over 2 years and aims to train the next generation of European stroke clinicians and researchers.

## ESO TRIALS ALLIANCE

ESO members are highly active in clinical and translational stroke research. In 2019, the ESO Trials Alliance was established to support European clinical scientists in the conduct of multinational randomized trials. ESO Trials Alliance aims to establish a European supernetwork that spans national borders and links stroke clinicians to conduct international multicenter trials more efficiently. Beginning with 5 founding national member stroke networks, ESO Trials Alliance has rapidly expanded and currently includes 9 national networks from England/Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Spain, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, and Turkey, comprising several hundred hospitals and experienced investigators. Further expansion is planned from 2021 to 2024. Several randomized trials are ongoing or in setup phase within ESO Trials Alliance countries, and the economies of scale are expected to improve competitiveness for future European funding applications.

## DEALING WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Maintaining stroke care throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge for many European stroke centers. To get an overview of where ESO as an organization could provide support to its members, a survey was carried out at the very beginning of the pandemic. In addition, ESO established a COVID-19 resource webpage for all members to share projects and papers related to the pandemic (<https://eso-stroke.org/>

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resources/covid-19/). Among the priorities was to continue educational and scientific activities such as ESO the winter school, research workshop, and conference in a virtual format.

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## ARTICLE INFORMATION

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Dr Sandset reports being the secretary general of European Stroke Organisation. The other authors report no conflicts.