European Society of Human Genetics

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From the President of the ESHG

Dear Fellow Members of the ESHG:

Prof. Dr. Andres Metspalu

I would like to welcome and thank all members of the European Society of Human Genetics for being active, productive and curious! Curiosity will move our field forward.
Goals for the society, as I see it, are to broaden the knowledge of human and medical genetics, bring new active scientists and physicians into our society, explain the basic genetics to the general public and be partner for the public as well as to the private sector. In order to do all this, ESHG has set up several committees. The Chairman is the key to an efficient committee and I would like to thank all our chairs!

I would like to thank the scientific programme committee for putting together a very exciting programme for the Amsterdam meeting and I do hope everyone will find something special in it – just for you. The next annual meeting 2007 will be held in Nice (France) instead of Barcelona (Spain). Due to unexpected reasons we had no other option and the annual meetings committee together with the Vienna Medical Academy will work with Barcelona in order to hold our 2008 annual meeting there.

Looking back to the last year, I believe that one of the most important new events was to organise the meeting of the presidents of the national societies of human genetics. Prof. Pier Franco Pignatti (Verona, Italy) organised the first meeting in Brussels on 12th of September, 2005, and the second meeting on 8th of May, 2006, will also be there. The first meeting was very successful, many important issues were discussed and plans were made for future activities. In this way ESHG will help to join our people in new activities in addition to our excellent scientific conferences in May and a continously improved EJHG every month. I believe this was something we were missing so far.
Finally, I would like to extend my special thanks to Prof. Helena Kääriäinen (Turku, Finnland), our secretary- general, for day-to-day hard work for the ESHG. She never gives up before things are done.
In this last line I like to assure the new President of the ESHG Prof. John Burn (Newcastle, UK) that ESHG is in good and healthy shape, please keep it so!

Andres Metspalu
President of the ESHG

ESHG Secretary General's Report

Professor Helena Kääriäinen, Turku, Finland

One of the major tasks of ESHG is to organize a scientific conference every year. The conferences are usually in May or early June and the ESHG yearly Membership Meeting is organized during the conference. New Board members as well as the new President Elect start their term during the conference.

Thus, the "previous year" of ESHG is not year 2005 but the time between two conferences, from Prague to Amsterdam. The conference in Prague, with its 1600 participants and friendly atmosphere, was a great success. The program of the Amsterdam conference looks excellent and we can expect another successful conference. The EMPAG-meeting (European Meeting on Psychosocial Aspects of Genetics) parallels ESHG meeting which adds to the diversity of the program. I hope that you all can make it to Amsterdam. And when coming to the conference, don't miss the opportunity to join the Membership Meeting and participate actively in the society.

What has happened in ESHG between Prague and Amsterdam? The Board had a meeting during the ASHG meeting in Salt Lake City and there President Andres Metspalu as well as the ESHG Board expressed strongly that education of geneticists is one of the society's major goals. Thus, for the first time, a joint educational session (on genetic association studies) together with the European Genetics Foundation (EGF) will take place in Amsterdam. Also, ESHG has increased the number of fellowships for ESHG conference and EGF courses and, this year, ESHG also gave fellowships to young scientists for attending the International Conference on Human Genetics in Brisbane.

ESHG feels that closer collaboration with national human genetics societies (NHGS) in all European countries would be beneficial. For this reason, representatives of these societies were invited to a meeting at Brussels Airport in September 2005 and the next meeting will take place during Amsterdam Conference. A problem has been to get into contact with all European NHGSs and, in spite of trying hard, some societies have apparently never been reached. The aim is to have short introductions and links to all NHGSs on the ESHG website. Thus, ESHG and its Board will hopefully get new members and new ideas.

Of the other activities of ESHG of which our own journal, EJHG, is the most important, you can find short reports in this Newsletter.

We are ESHG! It is an excellent society but if we want to improve it, we all must be active and produce new ideas for the Board and Presidents to work on!

Turku April 2nd, 2006

Helena Kääriäinen

Activity Report of the PPPC

Dr. Ségolène Aymé
Chair of the PPPC

The PPPC is currently composed of Violetta Anastasiadou, Ségolène Aymé (chair), Suzanne Braga, Jean-Jacques Cassiman, Domenico Coviello, Gerry Evers-Kiebooms, Shirley Hodgson, Helena Kääriäinen (secretary), Gyorgy Kosztolanyi, Ulf Kristoffersson (Deputy-chair), Joerg Schmidtke, Jorge Sequeiros, Martina Cornel and Lisbeth Tranebjaerg.

During the past year, the PPPC dedicated its activities
1) to the finalisation of a document on "Reproduction and Genetics"
2) to the preparation of a document on "Patenting of genes and its consequences on genetic testing"

The Assisted-Reproduction and Genetics report

The PPPC did the same exercise to explore the societal issues around the interface between assisted reproduction and genetics, in close collaboration with the European Society for Human Reproduction and Embryology. The background document was prepared under the supervision of Helena Kaariainen and sent for review to a large set of experts. Fifty of them were invited to a workshop which took place on 31 March-1 April 2005 in Seville, Spain. It was co-organised by ESHG, ESHRE and the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies, a joint research centre of the European Commission. The workshop was extremely useful and productive. We all learned a lot what really points to the utility of interdisciplinary meetings. Recommendations were drafted at the end of the workshop and submitted to the ESHG board in November 05. Both, the background document and the proposed recommendations, have been open for discussion on the website of the ESHG from June to August 05. They will be published soon in the European Journal of Human Genetics.

The Patenting and Testing report

The PPPC was requested to look at the issue of gene patenting in relation with genetic testing, jointly with the Patenting and Licensing Committee.
Two meetings took place. The first one was held in Leuven on 11 October 05 and dedicated to identifying the burning issues to be covered. The second meeting took place in Paris on 29 November 05. It included the following participants:
For the PPPC: Violetta Anastasiadou , Ségolène Aymé, Suzanne Braga , Jean-Jacques Cassiman, Domenico Coviello, Gerry Evers Kiebooms, Gyorgy Kosztolanyi, Ulf Kristoffersson, Shiley Hodgson, Helena Kääriäinen, Jörg Schmidtke, Jorge Sequeiros, Lisbeth Tranebjaerg
For the PLC: Philippe Gory, Gert Matthijs, Gert-Jan van Ommen, Dominique Stoppa-Lyonnet
As invited experts : Esther van Zimmeren, Jacques Warcoin, Siobhan Yeats, Fatmahan Atalar, Geertrui van Overwalle.
As secretary of the committees : Sirpa Soini.
The group discussed the document to be produced which had already been drafted by Sirpa Soini. It is supposed to be sent to experts later this year, then discussed during a workshop to be organised.

Report of the Publications Committee 2005

Professor G.J.B. van Ommen, Editor

The EJHG is in a phase of consolidation, improvement and upgrading. Several advances are worth noting. As for the outside: It will not have escaped our readers that the EJHG cover has undergone a thorough facelift as of 2006.

As for the content: First, the series of News and Commentary has been made into a regular feature. With this we aim to keep our readers abreast of science published in other journals, relevant to the global field of human genetics. N&C will also bring an occasional commentary on our own EJHG papers. The series is being edited by Haroon Ashraf, Nature Publishing Group's new Executive Editor Genetics. Second, the acquisition of regular reviews has been pursued more systematically since the appointment of Nico Katsanis as Review Editor. Third, the Practical Genetics series, with short descriptions of the latest knowledge status and patient case aspects, while taking more time than expected to set up, is now close to being launched in earnest. An attractive format has been designed and significant content has been and will further be developed by the Editor Phil Beales, in close collaboration with Infobiogen in Paris. For all three types of copy, prospective contributors are welcome to get in touch via the EJHG Editorial office.

In 2006 the EJHG is also continuing the publication of special issues with matters relevant to our profession. As follow-on to the four sets of recommendations and background documents of December 2004 – still freely available on our website – we will publish in the May 2006 issue our joint recommendations with the European Society of Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE) on Assisted Reproduction Technology, developed by the ESHG, PPPC and ESHRE participants, under the guidance of our General Secretary Helena Kääriäinen. Subsequently we will feature, in the June issue, an enclosed special on psychiatric genetics, co-edited by Guest-editor Jonathan Flint and Associate Editor Tony Monaco. In addition, later this year, we will also produce a set of recommendations and background considerations on the complex matter of gene patenting and diagnostics. This is jointly generated by the EJHG's PPPC (chair Segolène Ayme) and its new Patents and Licensing Committee (chair Gert Matthijs), in conjunction with external experts. For both the ART and the patenting report we are much indebted to our scribent Sirpa Sioni.

Finally some statistics on the regular aspects of the journal. Faced with the steady rise of submissions, our rejection rate increased slightly further, from 66% to 69%. Our production times have further shortened, with the average time to first decision decreasing from 38 to 31 days and time to final decision from 58 to 38 days. The increased web presence and e-subscription of the last years has spectacularly increased the number of hits and enhanced our non-European contributor interest, with 32.3% non-European papers in 2005 versus 20.5% in 2004. While this year's IF figures are not yet available, the prognosis is that last year's IF of 2.741 will regain lost ground this year. With the activities indicated above, we expect that this trend will continue in the coming period. No doubt the journal continues to grow and to become popular in the field.

Professor J.J. Cassiman, Chair Publication Committee

International Federation of Human Genetics Societies (IFHGS)

http://www.ifhgs.org

Liaison officer for the ESHG, Jean-Jacques Cassiman

The Executive Committee of the IFHGS under the presidency of Eric Haan is composed of the presidents and liaison officers of the full member societies: European Society of Human Genetics (ESHG): Andres Metspalu and Jean-Jacques Cassiman; the American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG): Stephen T. Warren, Judith Allanson and Elaine Strass; the Human Genetics Society of Australasia (HGSAA): John MacMillan and John Christodoulou; the Latin American Network of Human Genetics Societies (RELAGH): Jose Maria Cantu and Roberto Giugliani; the East Asian Union of Human Genetics Societies (EAUHGS): Takehiko Sasazuki and Yoichi Matsubara.

The IFHGS is growing rather slowly towards representation on all continents. There still seem to be some difficulties with the African Society and the Asia-Pacific Society of Human Genetics to get their act officially together. From India and Pakistan no further news but there is serious intent to form a regional grouping there as well. The IFHGS will give any requested support to these continental societies to reach formal recognition.
New corresponding and affiliate members who have not joined yet can still do so at
http://www.ifhgs.org

IFHGS/IGA Position Statement

The draft statement of understanding proposed by the International Genetic Alliance and the Federation has been approved by the executives of the two organizations and is now an official document. It will be placed on the federation website. Its implications are that the ICHG will accommodate the IGA representatives who will be selected to attend the congress and enjoy free registration, and to provide rental space and audiovisual support for their meeting. Exhibit space will also be provided at no cost.

International Congress of Human Genetics, Brisbane August 6 – 10, 2006
The preparations are in full swing and the scientific program is close to being finalized. Support for student fellowships is available from the different member societies.
http://www.ichg2006.com/

Future meetings

The meeting in 2011 will be hosted by the ASHG and will be held in Montreal.
The EAUHGS presented a proposal for the XIIIth ICHG to be held in the spring of 2016 in Yokohama, Japan. The congress will take place in the Pacifico Yokohama, a convention complex with conference center, exhibit hall and hotel. The city of Yokohama will contribute up to 2 million Yen to the congress. The Executives Committee agreed to accept the proposal of the EAUHGS.

Future Federation Meetings

The next executive committee meeting will be held at the ICHG in Brisbane.

SPC Report – AMSTERDAM Conference 2006

The Scientific Programme Committee for 2005-2006 was composed of Han Brunner (chair), Thierry Frébourg, Paulo Gasparini, Peter Heutink (Local Host), Juha Kere, Peter Lichter, Stanislas Lyonnet, Milan Macek, Jr., Andre Reis, Mariano Rocchi, Raquel Seruca, Cornelia van Duijn, GertJan van Ommen, Andrew Wilkie, Brunhilde Wirth.

Professor Han Brunner

The SPC met twice to organize the Amsterdam 2006 ESHG conference: in Amsterdam in June to decide on the plenary sessions and symposia, and in Vienna at the VMA offices in February, to select the abstracts for oral presentations and posters.
It was decided to make some changes to the format of the conference. First, we decided to have 4 rather than 3 parallel concurrent session, as the number of submitted abstracts increased steadily over the years, and is now approximately 1350. This allows us to keep the number of abstracts selected for oral presentation around 5% of the total number. Secondly, we decided to drop the late breaking session. The reason is that the SPC felt that while the quality of those abstracts was generally very good, not enough novelty and excitement was there to warrant a separate plenary session at the end of the meeting. Instead, the SPC adopted a suggestion by Juha Kere, to try to find an especially exciting speaker for the last day. Fortunately, we were able this year to attract Nobel Prize winner 2002, Professor Sydney Brenner, to deliver a lecture on "Humanity's Genes". This will hopefully keep the scientific excitement up for the entire conference, right until the end.
Another innovation will be to have one of the educational sessions involve a web cast from Bertinoro, which links this session to an EGF course on the statistical genetic analysis of complex phenotypes.
As usual, our second highlight of the final day of the conference will be the acceptance speech by our ESHG prize winner. This year, the ESHG Prize 2006 will be awarded to Professor Veronica van Heyningen (Edinburgh) in recognition of her elegant work which demonstrates how basic theoretical concepts can be systematically explored in the context of human genetic disease.
After the Amsterdam Conference, the SPC shall have to say goodbye to Andre Reis, Cornelia van Duijn, and last but not least to GertJan van Ommen. We thank them for their work and their dedication to making the meeting better.

The History of Medical Genetics in Finland

The history of Medical Genetics in Finland goes back to the 1950's when The Helsinki University Children's Hospital was the place to which all the most difficult or rare paediatric patients were referred to. This made it possible that the collective memory of the staff began to remember and connect with each other patients with unusual, rare, but similar symptoms. It happened mostly in unrelated families, but when familial cases were included, the possibility of inheritance was considered. In 1966 congenital nephrosis of the Finnish type became the first disease that was established to be inherited by autosomal recessive manner. That was the beginning of the expanding Finnish Disease Heritage, which now comprises more than 30 diseases that are much more common in Finland than elsewhere. This special interest of paediatricians and the development of cytogenetics in the 1960's was the foundation of medical genetics in Finland.
Genetic counselling had been performed from 1952 in small scale in Väestöliitto, Family Federation of Finland (FFF) by a "Genetics Board". FFF is a state funded union of associations dealing with family, population and social affairs. At that time termination of pregnancy was allowed only within special grounds, one of which being the suspicion that the foetus suffered from an inherited disease. The board comprised of a few geneticists and doctors, mainly gynaecologists. They were consulted, if risk of an inherited disease of the foetus was relevant and could be used as ground for the termination. Every now and then in addition to the official decision, the parents were counselled as well. This led to the foundation of first official national centre for genetic counselling, Department of Medical Genetics of Väestöliitto in 1971 (http://www.vaestoliitto.fi/in_english/genetics/). It started with one full-time medical geneticist in collaboration with the Department of Genetics at the University of Helsinki.

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The first chair in medical genetics was founded at the University of Helsinki in 1972, and the first professor nominated in 1974. The Department of Medical Genetics was established in 1976 and the first hospital department Laboratory of Prenatal Genetics at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Helsinki University Hospital in 1977. There, after the remaining four University Hospitals in Oulu, Kuopio, Tampere and Turku have got their Departments of Medical Genetics with counselling and prenatal diagnostics services.

Professional organizations

The Finnish Society for Medical Genetics (http://www.helsinki.fi/jarj/slgy) was founded in 1976 by ten paediatricians, ten physicians from other fields of medicine and seven human geneticists. In addition to organizing a few scientific meetings annually, the members were active in estimating the need of services in medical genetics in Finland, and promoting the foundation of medical genetics as a speciality. The natural scientists founded Geneticist in Health Care in 1983. Their main interest was to establish the training programme for hospital geneticists and make it a recognised speciality. Both are still active organizing meetings for scientific and practical professional purposes.

Speciality and education

The medical genetics speciality was established in 1981. Today the specialisation programmes are run by the medical faculties of Helsinki, Turku, Tampere and Oulu Universities. There are 32 specialists in medical genetics, five of which have retired. For biologists a national specialisation programme was introduced in 1990. It is run by the Department of Genetics at University of Helsinki, but the practical training that is included in it can be achieved at all laboratories with a qualified senior lecturer. For the certificate, a licentiate examination is required. At present there are 22 so called “hospital geneticists” in Finland.

Genetic services

The long distances in a rather sparsely populated country outside the capital area of Helsinki has lead to the development of eight genetic counselling clinics for the five million Finns. Six of the clinics are part of the public sector at the five university hospitals. There are two out patient clinics at Helsinki university hospital, one for prenatal diagnostics, and another for genetic counselling in general. The two private but state funded clinics are the Departments of Medical Genetics at FFF and Folkhälsan Department of Medical Genetics. They are situated in Helsinki and serve the whole country, the latter mainly the Swedish-speaking population of Finland.

In connection with the Helsinki University Hospital there are three genetic laboratories. The Laboratory of Cytomolecular Genetics (CMG) serves in cytogenetic and molecular genetic diagnostics of genetic and especially cancerous diseases. The Laboratory of Prenatal Genetics was founded 1977 for cytogenetic studies of amniotic cells. Today constitutional chromosome studies from pre- and postnatal samples and pre-implantation diagnostics are the main interests. The Laboratory of Molecular Genetics (http://www.hus.fi > huslab) was started in 1991 to offer DNA tests for inherited disorders. Today the range comprises about 50 inherited diseases. Particularly the rare disorders of the Finnish Disease Heritage and disease susceptibility genes are studied. All four university hospitals have their cyto-molecular genetic laboratories with a vast range of tests for genetic diseases. In addition there are three private genetic laboratories in the Helsinki area.

Quality control issues

All of the genetics laboratories in Finland take part in **external quality assessment programmes** of various systems like Labquality, EMQA, UK Nequas and some American ones. Two of the genetic out-patient clinics take part in the regular quality control rounds organized by the university hospital. The other six clinics do not yet have on going quality control systems, but plans for starting a programme have been made in most of them.

Research

The Finnish research on genetic diseases was started by the enthusiastic clinicians who collected and described groups of patients who suffered from the diseases belonging to the Finnish Disease Heritage. By 1972 twenty diseases had been published, and by 2000 about 35. The first gene for an autosomal recessive Finnish disease to be mapped was CLN1. It was mapped to the short arm of chromosome one in 1991, and causes the infantile form of neuronal ceroid lipofuscinosis. Since then almost all of the genes causing the 35 diseases have been mapped and cloned (http://www.findis.org).
Also families with hereditary colon cancer were collected and followed by surgeons starting from the mid-sixties. By 1985 the cancer families from middle parts of Finland were ready when developing molecular genetics could be used for mapping and cloning the colon cancer genes.
There are molecular genetics research groups at the Departments of Medical Genetics of all Universities with Medical Faculties (http://www.helsinki.fi/haartman/lgo/english/, http://medgen.utu.fi/en/index.htm), at the Department of Molecular Medicine at the National Public Health Institute (http://www.ktl.fi/portal/English) and the Institute of Genetics at Folkhälsan Research Center (http://www.folkhalsan.fi). In the recent years also many programmes to study genetics of the common complex diseases have been fruit full. The high standard of the health care, trust to the researchers and co-operation of the Finns, genetic isolates inside Finland and the population records maintained by the church and available from the 17th century have been the great resources and benefits providing means and supporting the research of genetic diseases.

Legislation

The National Board of Medicolegal Affairs grants permission for termination of pregnancy if malformation or inherited disease of the foetus is the cause. Termination is allowed until the end of 20 weeks of gestation in case of risk or suspicion of foetal anomaly or disease. If severe foetal abnormalities have been confirmed by reliable prenatal diagnostic methods, permission for termination can be given until the end of 24 weeks according to the law on the termination pregnancy (Act239/1970 and Act 572/1985). There are 57-60 thousand births in Finland per year and about 250-280 pregnancies are terminated due to foetal defects. The Finnish Register of Congenital Anomalies (Act556/1989, Statute774/1989) has been maintained by the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES) (http://www.stakes.fi) since 1963. Registration of malformations of the children and foetuses is national and population based. There is no legislation for pre-implantation diagnosis. A law for assisted reproduction is in preparation.

Bioethics

The people working in medical genetics have been oriented in bioethics from the start. The Finnish Society for Medical Genetics had an ethical board in the 1980's and in the beginning of 1990 the female geneticists started the society Genuines, which has had the tradition of discussing social issues related to medical genetics. From 1992 there has been a law on the status and rights of the patient (Act785/1992), which took effect in 1993. It incorporates the legal principles associated with the care and treatment of patients and has clarified and improved the legal protection of the individual patient in ever more technical health care system.

Patients' organizations

Great many of the patient organizations representing rare diseases founded the Finnish network of reference centres for rare diseases (http://www.harvinaiset.org) in 1991 by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Ten non-governmental welfare organisations work with handicapped persons.

During its existence approximately 30 associations and 30 support groups representing various rare diseases have been founded. Rare respiratory diseases, skin disorders, intellectual disabilities, hearing disorders, motion disabilities, neurological disabilities, visual disorders, rheumatic and inflammatory muscular diseases.

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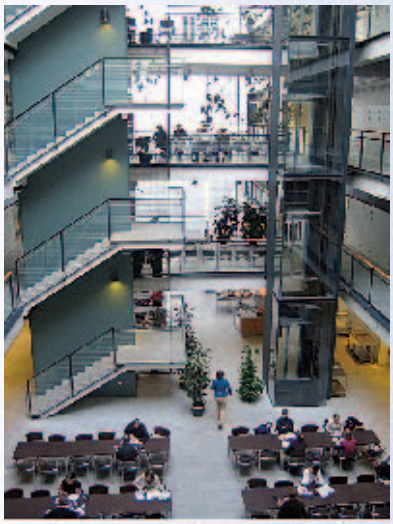
The water ways of Finland, rivers and thousands of lakes have always provided routes for travelling through the vast forests during the summers even at mid- night (a) and winters (b).

The situation of Finland has been on the border of the Eastern and Western Europe, which can be seen in the old architecture, Alexander the Second of Russia in front of the Lutheran Cathedral that was built in 1830-1852 to replace an earlier church from 1727 (a) and has statues of the Apostles made of zinc on the roof (b).

Over sized ferries travel daily back and forth from Helsinki to Stockholm and Tallinn all year around.



In Helsinki all of the research groups have close links with each other in Biomedicum Helsinki (http://www.biomedicum.fi) that gives modern facilities for the programmes in molecular medicine of inherited monogenic and polygenic diseases and cancer research.

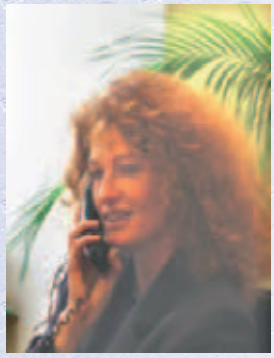
Meet ESHG's Partners

The Vienna Medical Academy

The Vienna Academy of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research was founded in 1924 and managed for years by the Nobel laureate Julius Wagner-Jauregg. The VMA is a non-profit organisation, providing organisational guidance, association management and staff resources to about 20 mostly medical conferences per year and over 35 medical associations.

For the first time in 2001, the VMA organised the ESHG-hosted 10th International Congress of Human Genetics in Vienna and since then all further annual meetings of the ESHG.
In January 2004, the association management department of the VMA was appointed with the management of membership activities as administrative secretariat of the ESHG.

Profiles of the VMA staff



Karin Knob, 43, grew up in Germany and moved back to her home country Austria in 1981 to study Veterinary Medicine. She got married, raised a son and gathered experience in different kinds of industries. Finally, in 1997, she joined the VMA to support the association management department. Very quickly her scope of work expanded and today she is solely responsible for the administration and management of roughly 18 medical associations. She is in charge of all ESHG membership matters, including online access and the society's accounts. Her excellent knowledge of computer techniques makes her contribution to the ESHG Newsletter essential. Also, she organises smaller seminars and conferences and usually staffs the ESHG membership stand at the Annual Conference.

Gerlinde M. Jahn, 53, joined the VMA in 2004 and, amongst other duties, is now responsible for ESHG membership matters and newsletter issues. She is a graduate of the Vienna University of Economics and has spent quite a number of years in the United States of America. There she was employed with the Austrian National Tourist Office in New York and promoted Austria to the conference and incentive industry in the US and Canada. Hence, her knowledge of the English language is outstanding and very useful for e.g. newsletter proof reading and international contacts. Within VMA she specialises in running medical postgraduate courses on VMA premises as well as administration, e.g. for ESHG, and organisation of smaller seminars and conferences.

Catherine Altermann, 37, born in Vienna, is a graduate of the Lycée Français de Vienne and has the great advantage of the bilingual education. In 1989, after being a conference host in the Austria Center Vienna for one year, she got employed by the VMA as conference manager and during the years she focused her work on the organisation of conferences, especially in the medical field of Rheumatology. Today she is VMA's expert for registration management of major meetings. Ever since the ESHG Annual Conference 2002 in Strasbourg she is responsible for all registration issues of this annual meeting.

Jerome del Picchia, 36, born in Vienna, father of 2 daughters, is a graduate of the Lycée Français de Vienne. Due to this bilingual education, his knowledge of French and German is excellent and hence a great asset in his later professional endeavours. After studying economics at the University of Vienna, he worked in the Austria Center Vienna as conference host from 1987-1989. His career in the VMA started in 1989, being a conference manager. 2004, after 15 years of continuous success in the international conference industry, he was appointed Executive Director of the VMA and shares this position's responsibilities with Mrs. Romana König. His first contact with the ESHG was during the 10th ICHG meeting in Vienna in 2001. Today his ESHG activities cover general organisational matters and handling of abstracts.

Exhibition and sponsoring matters – Rose International

Rose International, based in The Hague, The Netherlands, was established by the present owner/director Jantie de Roos in 1995. When the ESHG wrote out a tender in that same year for a "permanent" conference organiser, Rose applied. However, not for the entire package, Rose applied for the exhibition management and sponsor acquisition only and brought in a partner for the management of the conferences. Rose won the bid, a good marriage with ESHG, they are still together. The management of the conferences moved to Vienna Medical Academy in 2001, now the ESHG conference organizer.

The first task was to set up a database of companies with products and services relevant to the fields of the ESHG conferences. Quite a task at that time, most information came on paper. The process of updating the database is a permanent task, now gratefully using mostly the Internet. New companies pop up each year, existing ones disappear, are taken over or merge with others. Continuous movement in this industry.

The first exhibition actually organized by Rose for the ESHG was the one in Lisbon in 1998. With 36 exhibitors and 483 m² it was twice as large as ever before. Since then, the size of the exhibition has been growing steadily and in 2006 it looks like it will be about double the Lisbon size.

Jantie de Roos

Sponsor acquisition has also been growing steadily, with a major interest in the company satellite meetings during the conference. In 2006 we will have 8 - 10 of these meetings, which are always very well attended by the conference participants. Other favorite items are the conference bags, the badges, the Internet Café and the inserts in the conference bags, which are always restricted in size and number to avoid the bags becoming too heavy and too full.

In the ten years of its existence, Rose has been organizing a great number of exhibitions in subjects ranging from international libraries to photogrammetry and remote sending, geotextiles, many medical subjects (e.g. ophthalmology, hemophilia, anesthesiology) and salt in about 18 cities in Europe and outside. The ESHG is Rose International's first, and probably last, client.

Rose has always enjoyed working for and with the ESHG. When the cooperation started in 2005, the idea was to form a partnership, both starting on a new venture. It looks like this goal was achieved; this partnership is and will remain the chemistry in the relationship. The harmonious relationship with the conference organizer, Vienna Medical Academy, is a welcome and pleasant ingredient in this chemistry.

With thanks to the ESHG for its continuous support and confidence,
Jantie de Roos, 26 January 2006

Join us at the
European Human Genetics Conference 2007
June 16 - 19, 2007, Nice, France

Please note the change of date and location