

Caution – risk of learning!

A report from Trondheim



The 5th Research Forum of the European Association for Palliative Care (EAPC) took place 29–31 May 2008 in Trondheim, Norway.

Alexander Nicholson, a Consultant in Middlesbrough, shares his first impressions with us.

It is a pleasure to reflect upon the recent 5th Research Forum of the EAPC (European Association for Palliative Care). I pay tribute to the superlative efforts of Stein Kaasa, Augusto Caraceni, Franco de Conno and their colleagues on both the organising and scientific committees, and also to faculty and advisory board members, for crafting such a hugely successful scientific meeting.

In the beautiful cathedral city of Trondheim, Norway, at 63 degrees north in late May, it was not only the light of knowledge, but also the permanent light of day that provided the source of stimulus and inspiration, keeping colleagues eagerly discussing their ideas and plans into the small hours of the morning. Seasoned delegates – still fresh of countenance and lithe of mind – declared this the best meeting to date, while first-timers, with high expectations for the future, vowed to return. ‘Risk of learning’¹ was frequently reported to be running very high indeed.

Well over 1,000 participants

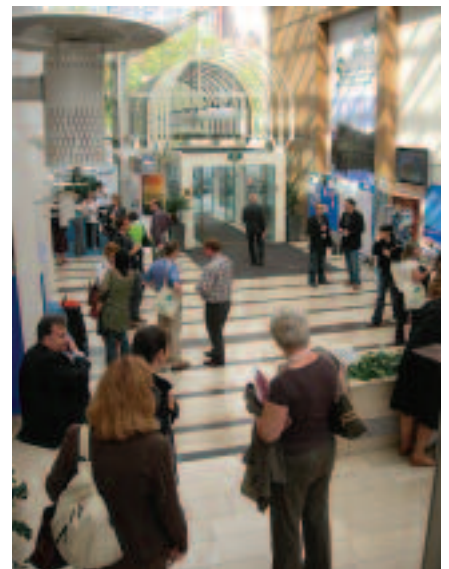
The opening address of Professor Stig A Slørdahl, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the Norwegian University of Science



Professor Stig A Slørdahl, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, who formally opened the 5th Research Forum



Above and below, the Raddisson SAS Royal Garden Hotel beside the river Nidelven, which was the centre for the Forum



and Technology, established the stature of Trondheim as a place of research and learning, after which all were amazed by the dramatic rise of the stage curtain to reveal the might of the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra adding verve to the start of proceedings.

Stein Kaasa’s welcome address outlined the scope and potential of the meeting, which drew together well over 1,000 participants, coming from 38 countries

Stein Kaasa giving his welcome address (below left). The Trondheim Symphony Orchestra





Andrew Hoy, Editor, and Carol Davis, Deputy Editor, *EJPC*



Delegates visit the busy exhibition and coffee area between lectures



Delegates from around the world attended the 5th EAPC Research Forum



Lukas Radbruch, President of the EAPC.
Below, the EAPC stand



representing every continent on the globe, to share some 540 oral and poster abstracts, in addition to invaluable informal exchange (not to mention the scope of national dress modelled by his team members).

A stimulating programme

The scientific programme was well planned. A welcome initiative was the inclusion of some of the best submissions as short presentations in the plenary sessions, alongside keynote addresses by Frank Skorpen, Sheila Payne and Robin Fainsinger.

Twenty-eight themed sessions addressed important domains within the research agenda. With multiple parallel sessions, difficult choices had to be made to gain full advantage of what was on offer. Fitter colleagues were seen sprinting between different halls, inspired by the conference early morning run. Impeccable timekeeping by speakers and chairs made this entirely feasible.

No session disappointed and I left each with new ideas and insights, stimulated by the quality of the work and presentations. Prominent in my memory are new perspectives on cachexia provided by Vickie Baracos, Ken Fearon and Florian Strasser, and the healthy debate surrounding systematic reviews fielded by Phil J Wiffen, Lukas Radbruch and Paddy Stone.

The potential of registry trials – embraced by surgeons and rheumatologists in the UK – arose with colleagues inspired to establish the necessary infrastructure and reporting systems.

Every morning, eight pairs of experts breakfasted early to share their experience and wisdom with colleagues. These were valuable opportunities not to be missed –

assuming one's preceding late night commitments permitted.

Sponsored satellite symposia focused on pain challenges and constipation, with management of breakthrough pain a prominent theme. The near future holds much promise of exciting potential with new pharmacotherapies.

Final notes

Two further acknowledgements. As a visitor from a nation of predominantly monolinguals, I applaud my international peers' superior skills in conducting proceedings in English. I also note the debt we owe to our generous sponsors, without whose support the meeting would not have been economic. Conscious of high standards of probity in our relationship with industry, let us not be shy in recognising the value of the support we receive to further education and research.

My final 'note' recalls the Friday evening's superb concert in the magnificent gothic splendour of Nidaros Cathedral. Music to revive and inspire came from the Nidarosdomens Guttekor (the Cathedral's boys choir) with Bjørn Vevang (organ), joined by the joyful and exuberant performances of Henning Sommerro (piano, organ and accordion) and John Pal Inderberg (saxophone).

Reference

1. Davis C. Risk of learning? *European Journal of Palliative Care* 2005; **12**: 95.

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Look for follow-up information on the EAPC website (www.eapcnet.org)