

Reprint

A. Kahn, Bruxelles

The European Society for the Study and Prevention of Infant Death (ESPID)

Introduction

In April 1990, an informal meeting was organized in Brussels by a group of clinicians and scientists who wanted to address the problem of infant deaths in Europe. It was felt that a joint European research effort could best be coordinated within a new dedicated scientific body, the European Society for the Study and Prevention of Infant Death (ESPID).

ESPID was designed to be a multinational and multidisciplinary scientific society. Professionals from diverse backgrounds meet within ESPID to exchange information, collect data, and initiate educative and preventive programs covering all aspects of infant death. They address all causes of death between the end of the first week of life and the end of the first year of life, including the sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

A steering committee was entrusted with the preparation of the new Society's Founding Congress. The members of the committee were

Prof. K. Bentele (FRG),
Prof. J. Emery, chairman (UK),

Dr. K. Helweg-Larsen (Denmark),
Prof. J. Huber (Netherlands),
Prof. L.M. Irgens (Norway),
Prof. P. Johnson (UK),
Prof. A. Kahn, secretary (Belgium), and
Mrs. M. Michaleli (Greece).

The ESPID Founding Congress was held in Rouen, France, on June 6 and 7, 1991. Under the auspices of

WHO Europe (Dr. M. Wagner) and the
EEC (Mrs. L. Papandreou),

the meeting gathered scientists from all European countries, including Central European states. Non-European countries were also represented, such as the USA, USSR, Greenland, Australia, and New Zealand.

More than 350 scientists coming from 27 countries and speaking 19 different languages were present to establish the new European Society.

Five Permanent Workgroups were created, each entrusted to three elected officers:

(1) Epidemiology and Public Health, headed by
Prof. B. Carpenter (UK),
Prof. L.M. Irgens (Norway),
Dr. E. Taylor (UK);

- (2) Clinical Problems, headed by
Prof. K. Bentele (FRG),
Dr. A. de Broca (France),
Prof. E. Mallet (France);
- (3) Pathology, headed by
Prof. J. Berry (UK),
Dr. K. Helweg-Larsen (Denmark),
Prof. J. Huber (The Netherlands);
- (4) Physiology, headed by
Dr. R. Haidmayer (Austria);
Prof. P. Johnson (UK),
Dr. D. Southall (UK);
- (5) Psycho-Social Problems, headed by
Dr. K. Bluglass (UK),
Dr. D. Dorival (France),
Dr. J. Powell (UK).

Participants of the five workgroups are to meet regularly to clarify common definitions, collect data in a systematic way, establish information clearinghouses, and develop prevention strategies.

The leadership of the new Society was entrusted to an Executive Board of six elected members:

- President: Prof. A. Kahn (Belgium)
- Vice President: Dr. K. Helweg-Larsen (Denmark)
- Secretary: Prof. K. Bentele (FRG)
- Treasurer: Dr. R. Haidmayer (Austria)
- Other members: Prof. J. Emery (UK),
Prof. E. Mallet (France)

The team of six elected officers assures the continuous activity of the Society and establishes permanent contacts with existing scientific societies.

A Coordination Board bridges ESPID with representatives from Parent Support Groups related to infant death. In particular, joint meetings are organized with representatives from SIDS Family Europe.

An ESPID Scientific Board is formed by the elected officers of the Permanent Workshops, assisted by those of the Executive Board. The Scientific Board helps to assure a

high standard of quality of the presentations and publications of the newly formed Society.

The participation in the ESPID of professionals in all fields of research on infant death is welcomed. Those interested in joining any of the Permanent Workgroups may receive further information by writing directly to the ESPID President, or to the Secretary General.

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The Second ESPID Congress will be held in Lübeck (FRG) on June 7-10, 1992. All those interested are warmly welcomed.