The 4th SEIN Course on Clinical Epileptology was held from 9-20 September 2013.

Although Autumn had seemed to make its early entrance, the students received a warm welcome from SEIN. On Sunday evening, 8 September, a small, informal welcome reception was organised at the hotel where they were staying to break the ice and to give the students the opportunity to get to know each other and to meet course organisers and fellow course participants.

The course lasted 2 weeks (10 working days), with 9 days at SEIN – Epilepsy Institute in the Netherlands in Heemstede and 1 day at the Free University in Amsterdam. After these intense weeks the participants returned to their own countries, tired but fulfilled. The students found the course to be of great use and exhilarating.

SEIN is a tertiary epilepsy centre in the Netherlands which was founded in 1882 and provides specialised multi-disciplinary care to people with complex forms of epilepsy. The mission of SEIN is to improve the quality of life of people with epilepsy worldwide. This course aims to contribute to this mission.

The students have gained a great deal of knowledge during their stay at SEIN and they have now taken this knowledge home to apply this in their own clinical settings, as well as to share with their colleagues.
A number of renowned speakers were able to contribute their expertise and time to the programme. In total 28 national and 4 international speakers participated.

Speakers

This year’s programme was grouped around the following themes:

- Classification & Epidemiology and Prognosis
- Diagnosis & Differential Diagnosis in Adults
- Clinical Neurophysiology in Epilepsy and Syncope
- EEG contribution to Epilepsy Classification & Pre-Surgical Workup
- Imaging & Diagnostic Tools in Epilepsy
- Epilepsy Surgery
- Genetics & Epilepsy
- Epilepsy Care: Experiences & Sharing Knowledge
- Pharmacology & AED Treatment
- Epilepsy in Children
- Internet as an Information Tool
- Educational Issues
- How to Present Scientific Data
- International Affairs and Remote Area’s

The programme consisted of didactic sessions, interactive group discussions, workshops and site visits.

Social activities included a welcome reception on the evening prior to the start of the course, a group outing (see page 5 for more details) and a closing dinner.

A new topic was added to this year’s programme: Epilepsy Care in Student’s Own Countries. This was an interactive session inserted into the programme to stimulate the students to think about epilepsy care in their own settings, and how they could improve this. More details on this session are found on page 3.

At the end of each day there were feedback sessions during which the students could discuss the topics that were covered during that day or any other issues which came up.

The course also ended with a light-hearted multiple-choice quiz entitled “Who wants to be an epileptologist?”. Three prizes were awarded to the students with the highest scores:

1st prize: Rui Loureiro, Portugal (video camera)
2nd prize: Leyla Baysal, Turkey (MP4 player)
3rd prize: Foster Osei-Poku, Ghana (memory stick).

Participants

This year’s participants came from Europe (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Georgia, Montenegro, Portugal, Turkey), Africa (D.R. Congo, Ghana and Namibia), South East Asia (Indonesia, Myanmar) and the Western Pacific (China). A total of 16 young doctors participated in the course, with varied medical backgrounds, but all with a common interest in epilepsy.

A number of Dutch fellows currently working at SEIN also participated in the course, either in full, or for selected topics. One of the Dutch students commented that she felt it was a highly informative course in which all aspects of epilepsy were presented in an interactive manner. Besides this, it was also a unique experience to hear from the participants what the (social) consequences are for people with epilepsy in other countries.

Participants

This year’s participants came from Europe (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Georgia, Montenegro, Portugal, Turkey), Africa (D.R. Congo, Ghana and Namibia), South East Asia (Indonesia, Myanmar) and the Western Pacific (China). A total of 16 young doctors participated in the course, with varied medical backgrounds, but all with a common interest in epilepsy.

A number of Dutch fellows currently working at SEIN also participated in the course, either in full, or for selected topics. One of the Dutch students commented that she felt it was a highly informative course in which all aspects of epilepsy were presented in an interactive manner. Besides this, it was also a unique experience to hear from the participants what the (social) consequences are for people with epilepsy in other countries.

Speakers

A number of renowned speakers were able to contribute their expertise and time to the programme. In total 28 national and 4 international speakers participated.

Programme

This year’s programme was grouped around the following themes:

- Classification & Epidemiology and Prognosis
- Diagnosis & Differential Diagnosis in Adults
- Clinical Neurophysiology in Epilepsy and Syncope
- EEG contribution to Epilepsy Classification & Pre-Surgical Workup
- Imaging & Diagnostic Tools in Epilepsy
- Epilepsy Surgery
- Genetics & Epilepsy
- Epilepsy Care: Experiences & Sharing Knowledge
- Pharmacology & AED Treatment
- Epilepsy in Children
- Internet as an Information Tool
- Educational Issues
- How to Present Scientific Data
- International Affairs and Remote Area’s

The programme consisted of didactic sessions, interactive group discussions, workshops and site visits.

Social activities included a welcome reception on the evening prior to the start of the course, a group outing (see page 5 for more details) and a closing dinner.

A new topic was added to this year’s programme: Epilepsy Care in Student’s Own Countries. This was an interactive session inserted into the programme to stimulate the students to think about epilepsy care in their own settings, and how they could improve this. More details on this session are found on page 3.

At the end of each day there were feedback sessions during which the students could discuss the topics that were covered during that day or any other issues which came up.

The course also ended with a light-hearted multiple-choice quiz entitled “Who wants to be an epileptologist?”. Three prizes were awarded to the students with the highest scores:

1st prize: Rui Loureiro, Portugal (video camera)
2nd prize: Leyla Baysal, Turkey (MP4 player)
3rd prize: Foster Osei-Poku, Ghana (memory stick).

“In one word:
Brilliant!”
(comment from a student)
EACCME Accreditation

The course has been granted 52 European CME credits (ECMEC) by the European Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (EACCME). The highest number of credits given thus far for the course since it was set up 4 years ago. All participants have received a certificate of accreditation which will allow them to validate these credits in their own countries.

Epilepsy Care in Student’s own countries

The aim of this session was to allow the students to share their experiences with epilepsy care, each in their own countries and regions. The students were asked to answer 7 questions on epilepsy care in their own countries prior to this session:

1. Which anti-epileptic drugs (AED’s) are available in your country?
2. Are these AED’s easily accessible for people with epilepsy (how are they prescribed)?
3. Are these anti-epileptic drugs affordable for people with epilepsy (what do they cost)?
4. Is epilepsy surgery available?
5. Describe the organization of epilepsy care in your country.
6. How much time do doctors spend with patients, per consultation (on average)?
7. Do you see patients with epilepsy yourself? If so, how often?

The replies were then presented to serve as a basis for discussions and to trigger the students to think about what could be done to improve the state of epilepsy care in their own countries. The students were split into three groups: Africa, Asia and Europe. Each group was asked to present a proposal for an epilepsy programme for the countries in these respective regions.

All three groups proposed similar programmes which focus on:
• Identifying problems.
• Raising awareness (patient, public & professional education).
• Reaching key people in the community.
• Securing availability, accessibility and affordability of AED’s.
• Promoting professional education.
• Fostering regional cooperation to refer patients to countries where certain facilities are available.

what is lacking:
• Adequate epilepsy services.
• Knowledge about epilepsy in the general public.
• Appropriate diagnosis and treatment.

There is a great need for:
• Raising awareness.
• Reducing stigma.
• Placing epilepsy on government’s agenda’s.

Consensus was reached on the following:
• Any improvements in epilepsy care should be incorporated in the present infrastructure to ensure sustainability.
• Solving problems at the primary health care level will prevent many problems (this level plays a key role – it is the gateway through which people with epilepsy enter the health system).

Finally, it was agreed that current activities need to be evaluated on efficiency and impact, before scaling up is in order.
Assessment

Prior to the start of the course the students were asked to complete the following homework assignments as preparation:

- An essay of 1000 words on one of the following topics:
  - Dynamics of epilepsy in the population
  - Impact of epilepsy
  - Pharmacological diagnosis of epilepsy
  - Differential diagnosis of epilepsy
- A case-study, which had to be prepared according to a pre-set format describing:
  - General and background information
  - Clinical assessment
  - Co-morbidities/operations
  - Drug and social history
  - Neurological examination
  - Impression
  - Hypothesis

The aim of the case study was to learn how to present a case and encourage discussion among the participants about a possible diagnosis.

To comply with accreditation requirements, and also to assess the student’s knowledge at the end of the course, they were given two written assessments (consisting of 50 multiple choice questions in total) – one at the end of week 1, the other at the end of week 2.

The total score for the entire assessment was 10 points (5 points for the written assessments, 2.5 points for the essay and 2.5 points for the case study). We are delighted to announce that all participants passed their assessments: the average score was 7.0.

Grants

The World Health Organization, African Regional Office, funded two participants from the African Region: DRP Congo and Namibia. These participants are involved in epilepsy projects in their own countries and this course was a perfect opportunity to contribute to capacity building there. Furthermore, participants from Ghana and Myanmar were partially sponsored through WHO demonstration projects in their respective countries.

This year we were also able to receive funding from NUFFIC for two students: one from Bosnia & Herzegovina and one from Myanmar. The funding covered the costs for their participation, travel and accommodation. Unfortunately, due to budgetary restrictions due to the enduring financial crisis, NUFFIC was not able to sponsor more students.

NUFFIC is the Netherlands organisation for international cooperation in higher education. As an independent, non-profit organisation based in The Hague, the Netherlands, NUFFIC supports internationalisation in higher education, research and professional education in the Netherlands and abroad, and helps improve access to higher education worldwide.
Evaluation
The participants were provided with an evaluation form (at the end of week 1 and the end of week 2) to rate all aspects of the course. This survey revealed that the course was received very positively by the students with high ratings (mean score):

- course topics (content): 9.48
- speaker skills: 9.39
- course facilities: 9.38
- information material: 8.83
- hotel accommodation: 7.53
- organised leisure activities: 9.81
- transport: 9.41

Under ‘information material’, the hand-outs were not all in a consistent format and we shall ask the speakers to pay more attention to this in the future. With regards to the hotel accommodation, last year students started sharing accommodation in order to promote group cohesion. Evaluation, however, shows that 3 people sharing a studio is too crowded.

Students indicated that they would have liked to have more case presentation time, a practical workshop on interpreting EEG’s and more information on status epilepticus. All comments will be taken into account for the next course. Reasons for attending the course can be summarised as follows: “to improve epilepsy care in the student’s home country”, to “learn from epilepsy experts” and “to learn from each other”. All students indicated they would recommend the course to fellow colleagues.

Group outing
A obligatory group outing was organised halfway during the course. The participants were taken to an open-air museum with windmills and typical Dutch craftsmanship (Zaanse Schans). The day ended with a group dinner. The outing was organised to give the students a taste of the Netherlands and its culture. It was a pleasant day, enjoyed by all participants, and was a welcome break from studying!

Acknowledgements
The organisation of this course would not have been possible without unrestricted grants from UCB Pharma S.A. Belgium. SEIN is grateful for their continued support.

The following companies sponsored students to participate:

- Newbridge Pharmaceuticals, Dubai, U.A.E.
- UCB Trading (Shanghai) Co. Ltd.
- UCB Pharma A.S. Turkey

Local support in the Netherlands was also received from:
- Ambassador City Centre Hotel, Haarlem
- Restaurant De Ark, Haarlem
- Brasserie L’Anders, Haarlem
- Pannenkoekenrestaurant De Kraai, Zaandam
- Jan de Wit Autocars, Haarlem
- Twin Catering & Partyservice B.V., Boesingheliede

The course was facilitated through collaboration between SEIN and the VUmc. In-kind contributions from both institutions were received, as well as generous support from SEIN. Last but not least, the course organisers would like to thank all who have helped to make this course a success. Special thanks go to the speakers who gave their time and expertise to the programme.