

Congress Interview



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Q1 Can you please briefly describe the main duties and responsibilities of the European Society of Cardiology's (ESC) Publications Committee?

The ESC Publications Committee co-ordinates and oversees all scientific journals as well as books of the ESC. The committee is chaired by myself and Prof John A. Camm (Vice-Chair) from London, UK, and involves all the ESC Journal editors, as well as their editorial managers. For some items on the agenda for the publications committee meeting, publishers are also welcomed to discuss common issues. The ESC Publications Committee meets three times a year, i.e., at the ESC Annual Congress, in January, and in summer. At these meetings the Publications Committee discuss issues of common interest such as the changing publication landscape, the performance of each of the journals, strategic measures to improve visibility and impact, as well as quality of the journals among other issues.

Q2 The ESC publishes the European Heart Journal and 11 other periodicals detailing cardiovascular medicine and research. How does the committee identify areas of research to which increased awareness is, in your opinion, deserved?

Indeed, the ESC Journal family has grown over the last few years and now covers the entire field of cardiovascular medicine and research. The topics of each of the speciality journals have been selected carefully and reflect the increasing specialisation of cardiovascular medicine into larger and smaller areas. Personally, I am convinced that we currently have reached saturation and should not consider any other journals, otherwise some of the titles may compete amongst each other for manuscripts. A new area that has been discussed is congenital heart disease; however, we decided that such articles should be covered by the European Journal of Heart Failure, European Journal of Preventive Cardiology, or Europace. An evolving area that has not been yet covered is valvular heart disease, but this is currently centre stage and therefore mostly published in the European Heart Journal or in parts of the EuroIntervention publication.

Q3 Complementary to their other publications, the ESC produces an eJournal titled EuroIntervention. Are we witnessing a shift in the way medical publishers operate towards providing content through a predominately digital medium?

Indeed, EuroIntervention is published by Europa, a French based company, that also runs the EuroPCR Annual Congress in Paris, France. Nevertheless, we strongly interact with EuroIntervention and transfer many manuscripts to this journal. The journal is not only electronic, but also in print, like all other journals that we publish except for ESC Heart Failure. We have investigated the issue of print versus digital and there is clearly an age factor involved; older readers tend to prefer print, while the younger generation prefer digital. It is a question of time until most journals may only be available in digital form.

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Q4 How important is communication with other ESC committees towards achieving the goals that you set yourself?

The most important interaction we have with other ESC committees is with the ESC Guidelines Committee because we publish all our guidelines in the European Heart Journal. Furthermore, the ESC Textbook of Cardiovascular Medicine and its electronic database ESC CardioMed interact very intensively with the newly developing guidelines of the ESC. As such, we aim to shorten the ESC guidelines and print, or make available, background information, epidemiology, mechanisms, and so forth in the ESC Textbook of Cardiovascular Medicine and ESC CardioMed, respectively.

Q5 Does the Publications Committee liaise with presenters and contributors at each ESC Congress in order to promote their respective content and find potential contributors?

No, this is left to the individual editors. As the editor of the European Heart Journal, I contact all presenters of Hotline Sessions at the ESC and its affiliated congresses. The manuscript is submitted as a Fast Track with online presentations at the

time of the congress, for instance in Paris later this month.

Q6 The ESC is one of the largest bodies of cardiologists in the World, with >95,000 members. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages, from a publication standpoint, of providing content to this many people?

Unlike the American College of Cardiology (ACC) or the American Heart Association (AHA), which mainly serve native English-speaking members, readers, and contributors, the ESC involves numerous countries where English is the second language and, in some instances, not widely spoken. The healthcare systems in all these member states are quite different, as is the economic level or gross national product; therefore, many recommendations published

by the ESC are not affordable in certain countries and in others they are immediately adopted. Nevertheless, the more successful that the ESC has been, the more it has been able to bring together cardiologists and physicians interested in cardiovascular medicine and research from all over the world, and to provide high quality educational programmes, textbooks, and scientific journals.

Q7 'Plan S', an initiative to enforce mandatory open-access content across the European medical publication landscape, is garnering increased attention in the media. What are your thoughts on the implications this could have for the ESC, and the industry as a whole?

I have published about Plan S on several occasions, and I do consider it as a big threat in regard to the way it is implemented. I welcome open-access in principle, although I am convinced that the hybrid model of publishing, incorporating income from subscriptions with the option of buying or to be selected as open-access, is currently the best model, allowing for an effective and professional editorial system. Unfortunately, Plan S does not allow for this, and this creates difficulties for many of the top journals, especially as American companies do

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not currently seem to consider Plan S as a viable option. This may cause significant issues for the European community. I believe that Plan S is quite ideological as it currently stands, and we should allow hybrid journals as well as open-access journals in the future, rather than having a strict open-access only policy.

The financial implications for scientific societies are quite significant; most medical societies offer their journal as a benefit of membership, and this would fall apart with Plan S and endanger their financial structure. Even for the ESC, Plan S would be financially disadvantageous. Most of all, a split of the scientific community, with some funding bodies requiring Plan S while others do not, specifically the highly competitive American bodies, would create a big threat to the scientific journals publishing with the hybrid structure.

Finally, what advice would you give to other Congress-affiliated Publication Committees that are looking to provide similarly high-quality content?

There are not many other congress-affiliated publications committees like the one of the ESC. The AHA also has a journal family and the ACC has built a smaller, but significant journal family as well. I am sure in other large scientific societies, for example, oncology, similar issues may arise. Any journal family needs a strong publications committee where efforts can be coordinated, strategy is discussed, the pros/cons and strengths/weaknesses evaluated, and the appropriate measures taken.

