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Congress Reviews: MIR 2009 Takes Centre Stage

Making Imaging Relevant

The 12th edition of the annual Management in Radiology (MIR) congress, a professional meeting aimed at leaders, practitioners, managers and administrators of radiology departments worldwide, took place in Riga, Latvia from 30 September until 2 October, 2009. The meeting experienced a large boost in the number of attendees, compared with previous years, with a large number of local participants from the Baltic States, and shows that management is gaining ground as a stand-alone topic amongst today's increasingly business-oriented healthcare leaders, including radiologists. Following on from the success of MIR's first annual junior workshop for radiologists interested in healthcare business and management topics, which took place this summer in the UK, the Riga congress attracted top presenters to share their thoughts on important subjects pertinent to the working lives of chairmen of medical imaging departments.

Chairman Assembles Information-Rich Programme

For the third year in succession since she first took up the mantle of chairman of MIR, Dr. Nicola Strickland put together an incisive and comprehensive programme of management-focused presentations. Representatives locally and from abroad enjoyed lively debates on topics such as regulations and standards in teleradiology, managing imaging IT, and what was largely perceived to be the most valuable and entertaining session of the programme: "A Management Decision Which has Made a Difference to Managing our Imaging Department", conceived and chaired by Prof. Philip Gishen, and debated by eight of the world's most senior medical imaging experts, including Prof. Jim Thrall (US), Prof. Michel Claudon (FR) and Prof. Maximilian Reiser (DE).

The session was followed by an equally engaging discussion of the threats faced by nuclear medicine today: representatives of the European Association of Nuclear Medicine (EANM) and other related bodies were present to debate issues such as who should have control of nuclear medicine, the radiologist or nuclear medicine physician, and how thus to develop a curriculum to educate young specialists with an interest in the discipline.

Does Radiology Have an Image Problem?

The 2009 MIR Congress was subtitled "Making Imaging Relevant": an important alternative definition of the MIR acronym. A recurrent topic that threaded through many of the sessions is the growing need for radiologists to initiate and value closer links with their clients. This closer relationship between the radiologist, their scientific colleagues and, crucially, the patient, is intended to combat the impression that radiologists merely generate imaging reports. Many sessions questioned the present tendency to hand more roles to radiographers, without first increasing the standards of radiographers' professional education to meet an expanded workload with respect to patient safety. The sessions also emphasised concerns over the perceived passivity of radiologists in considering how peers and the public view their work. The major concern is that a lack of recognition for the work and expertise of the radiologist amongst the scientific community may undermine and ultimately fragment the field.

Threats to Leadership in Radiology: The EU and US

Present as a representative of the European Society of Radiology, Prof. Luis Donoso (Spain), gave a talk on the new and intense focus of the ESR on radiology and the European Institutions. Introducing the new ESR webpage that aims to disseminate information on the various topics of interest specifically to the imaging community, from the working time directive to training and education, the talk had much to say about why radiologists should pay attention to legislative developments. This was followed by a talk from Prof. Steven Baker (US) on the challenges being faced by radiologists in the US, touching on topical issues such as public versus the private sector, and access to medical imaging by patients.

Outstanding Social Events

The MIR congress in Riga was the culmination of three years of shaping and planning by local organiser Dr. Mara Epermane from Valmiera, Latvia, who received well-deserved thanks for her role in promoting the congress locally and for organising an outstanding and unique evening entertainment programme, including a special gala dinner held inside the museum of modern art in Riga, which enabled attendees to peruse Latvian art following a wonderful local dinner, accompanied by a very talented band of jazz singers. Dr. Epermane was also responsible for coordinating a presentation at the beginning of the congress on the many diverse economic and fundamental challenges being faced by medical imaging in the Baltic States, featuring luminaries from the national radiology societies in the three countries of that region. These include a decreasing and rapidly aging population, funding problems within the national reimbursement systems and a lack of technological parity compared with other EU states.

Registration Now Online for MIR Annual Winter Course

Aside from the congress, MIR has just opened up online pre-registration for its annual winter course, to be held near Schladming in Austria, from 14 – 16 January, 2010. As usual, a set programme of structured interactive workshops by experts in healthcare management will be offered to attendees. This course traditionally receives great feedback from attendees, and continues to increase its reputation for high quality content. More information on this and other activities are available at www.mir-online.org.

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