



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

European Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology and Reproductive Biology

journal homepage: www.journals.elsevier.com/european-journal-of-obstetrics-and-gynecology-and-reproductive-biology



Expert Opinion

Advancing postgraduate training in obstetrics and gynaecology: Report from ENTOG UK exchange and scientific meeting

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Medical education
Postgraduate training
Trainees network
Clinical academic training

Introduction

The European Network of Trainees in Obstetrics and Gynaecology (ENTOG) is a non-profit organisation representing postgraduate trainees in obstetrics and gynaecology. ENTOG aims to improve training standards and deliver high quality care across Europe. ENTOG Exchange and Scientific Meeting serves as a pivotal platform for cross-border collaboration, knowledge sharing, harmonisation of education and cultural enrichment. In this report, we explore the key aspects of the ENTOG Exchange and Scientific Meeting 2023, its advantages, and outline a vision for its future development.

ENTOG exchange

The 2023 ENTOG Exchange was hosted by the United Kingdom (UK) with 44 European Observers attending from 24-member countries. Exchangees had the opportunity to experience clinical practice within the UK through shadow placements in hospitals across the UK. This represents the 31st exchange since 1992. International exchanges are common practice in corporate professions due to improvements in global job opportunities and networking it is not common in the medical field. Whilst there is a paucity of longitudinal data on the role of such international exchanges particularly in the field of healthcare, the evidence base in interprofessional shadow learning suggests that such shadowing may be associated with improved professional knowledge,

attitudes around collaborative working and communication [1,2]. In addition, wider cultural exposure improves trainees' cultural awareness and aids in the development of effective interaction with patients from differing cultures. The importance of this is twofold; firstly, previous evidence suggests inconsistent delivery of cultural competence training within the medical curriculum, secondly poor cultural awareness and culturally inappropriate maternity care is recognised as a risk factor for poor outcomes [3,4]. Furthermore, the development of awareness of differing healthcare systems and patient populations challenges trainees to innovate and grow professionally, which fosters resilience and adaptability. The exchange, thus, demonstrates benefits to both the trainees participating and the units they work within. It also provides a valuable framework to assess the benefits of international shadow learning.

Annual scientific meeting theme: periconception

The scientific meeting was hosted in collaboration with the West Midlands Obstetrics and Gynaecology (O&G) Trainees Committee, showcasing the commitment of both the national and regional bodies to promote educational opportunities and international collaboration in the field. The theme of the meeting was "Periconception: The future", reflecting the evolving priorities and challenges in obstetrics and gynaecology. Critical aspects of the delivery of healthcare were explored including pre-conceptual maternal health, early placental disorders and

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejogrb.2023.10.018>

Received 8 October 2023; Accepted 13 October 2023

Available online 14 October 2023

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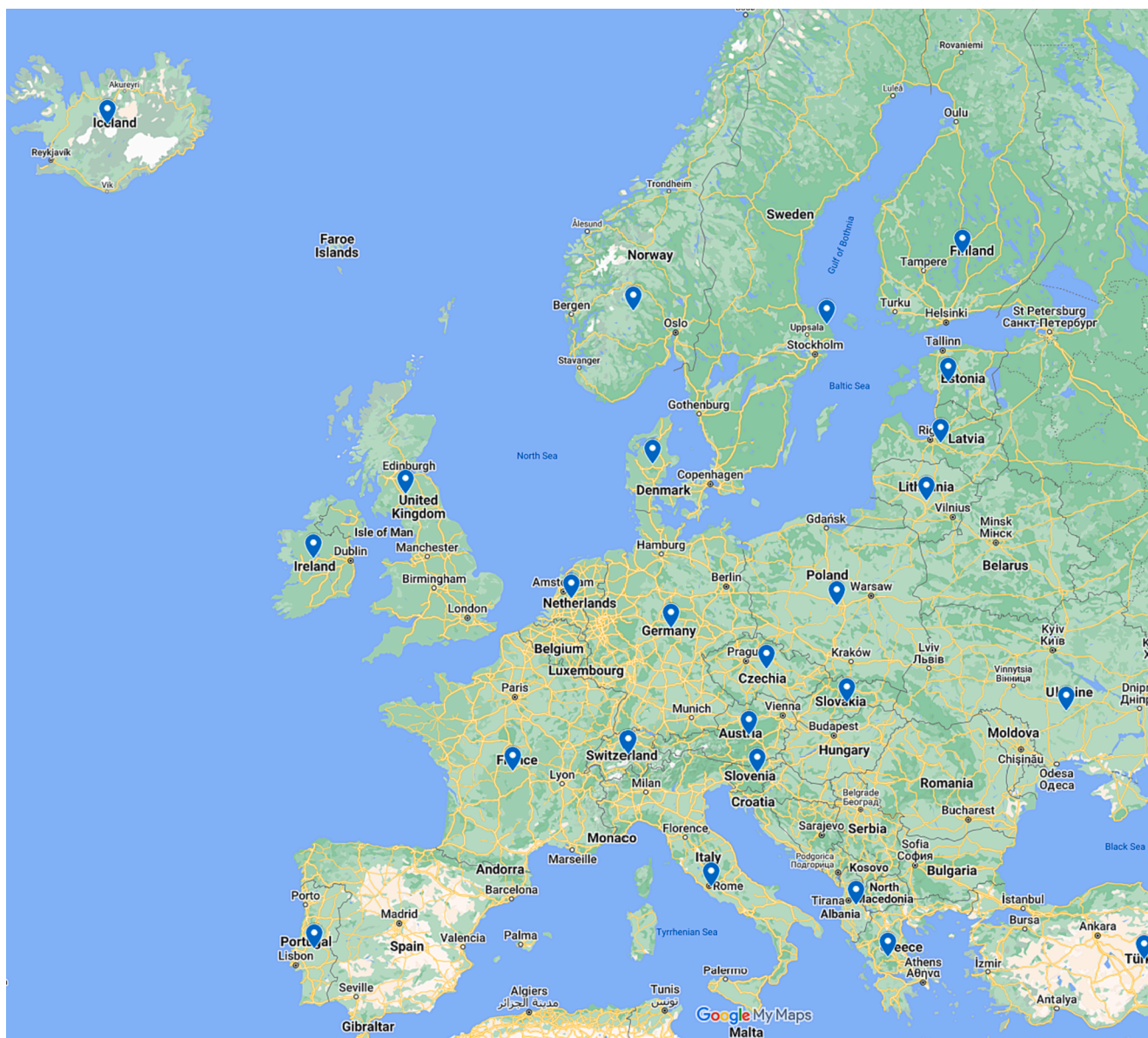


Fig. 1. Distribution of Exchange Trainees by geographic region.

reproductive health. The theme was developed to explore the collaborative possibilities it offers across all disciplines within O&G. The event attracted 139 trainees from across Europe (see Fig. 1 and Table 1). Overall, 102 of 110 (92.7 %) respondents felt the meeting was relevant and 103 (93.6 %) would attend again. A key theme from the free-text feedback was the ability to network with international trainees. This demonstrates the perceived acceptability of such pan-trainee events. Further to this, previous work has demonstrated the patient benefit derived from institutional exposure to research [5]. Previous studies have highlighted the benefits of trainee driven collaborative networks [6]. This suggests the potential benefit to be gained from collaborations instigated by the exchange. The use of a scientific meeting linked to an exchange, therefore, provides a model of engagement of trainees who would not necessarily engage with research, further building on the benefits to be gained from the Exchange and Scientific meeting format.

The future of ENTOG exchange and scientific meeting

In order to shape the future of educational exchanges for post-graduate training in obstetrics and gynaecology and maximise their

impact, several steps can be considered. Firstly, extending the duration of these exchanges to several weeks or months can provide a more immersive experience, foster deeper relationships, and offer a broader understanding of healthcare systems. Secondly, it is crucial to develop a structured curriculum for exchange programs, covering a wide range of relevant topics to ensure that participants receive a well-rounded experience, ultimately aiming to harmonise education standards across Europe. Additionally, including clinical rotations in various obstetrics and gynaecology subspecialties can expose participants to a broader spectrum of cases and procedures. Integrating telemedicine and virtual components into these exchanges can facilitate ongoing collaboration, knowledge sharing, and accessibility. Establishing mentorship programs to support participants throughout their exchange experience is essential, as is seeking funding opportunities to reduce financial barriers, making exchanges accessible to a wider range of trainees. Implementing feedback mechanisms for continuous improvement of exchange programs, considering participant input for refinement, is vital. Moreover, forging strategic partnerships with international institutions can expand the reach and impact of these exchange programs. Finally, it is important to consider environmental sustainability in exchange

Table 1
Number of Trainees Attending the Scientific Meeting.

Country	Attendees
Albania	1
Austria	2
Czech Republic	2
Denmark	3
Estonia	2
Finland	2
France	2
Germany	3
Greece	2
Iceland	1
Italy	3
Latvia	2
Lithuania	2
Netherlands	9
Norway	2
Poland	3
Portugal	2
Republic of Ireland	6
Slovakia	2
Slovenia	3
Sweden	3
Switzerland	3
Turkey	3
Ukraine	1
United Kingdom	75
Total	139

programs, exploring practices such as virtual exchanges to reduce travel-related emissions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the ENTOG Exchange and Scientific Meeting serves as a beacon of international collaboration and learning in the field of obstetrics and gynaecology. By embracing innovative strategies and enhancing the program's structure, we can ensure that these educational exchanges continue to thrive and contribute significantly to the development of well-rounded and globally aware healthcare professionals. These efforts will ultimately benefit women's health on a global scale, making a positive impact for generations to come.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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