Letter from the Chairman

It is my pleasure to introduce this edition of the ENETS Newsletter. It is in part an opportunity to introduce myself, as well, as the new chairman of the Society. I would like to thank my colleagues for giving me this chance to serve and lead ENETS. The next two years as chairman, I expect, will be an exciting time for us. I would like to share with you here, and in the coming Newsletters, some of the events and ideas that are currently shaping ENETS, and I welcome any comments and feedback you may have that will help make my chairmanship productive.

Inside, you will see an overview of this year’s Annual Conference in Berlin. The conference drew about 1,300 delegates, the most ever for the meeting. It also broke a record for the number of abstracts submitted, which exceeded 150. Feedback thus far has been extremely positive, notably for the scientific content. We hope and plan to replicate that for next year’s conference, planned for March in Lisbon, Portugal.

More immediately, however, ENETS will hold its annual Advisory Board conference in Barcelona in November 2010. The focus will be on updating and revising the popular ENETS Consensus Guidelines. The Board will also consider the prospect of ENETS organizing clinical trials, which has been an aim of the Society since its founding in 2004. We will keep you posted on the results of the conference.

If you attended the Berlin Annual Conference, you likely learned of the success of the pilot phase of ENETS Centers of Excellence. In the past year, six European centers worked toward qualifying for certification. The process for this included independent evaluation and auditing in association with a European-accredited medical health care evaluation company, GSG Dortmund. The test phase was rigorous, requiring months of preparation. The hospitals selected to participate in the test phase (based on a high number of patients treated in their centers), and which are now certified, are: Charité University Hospital, Berlin; Rigshospitalet, Copenhagen; Royal Free Hospital, London; Hôpital Beaujon, at Clichy in Paris; Erasmus Medical Center, Rotterdam; and University Hospital, Uppsala in Sweden. Expansion of the program is foreseen for later this year.

Finally, I would also like to congratulate Dr. Maria Cristina de Martino, who has been awarded in cooperation with Ipsen, the 2010, “Excellence in Translational Medicine in NET Disease” fellowship. Dr. de Martino, who is principally at the Università Federico II in Naples, was awarded the prize at the Berlin conference. She will use the funds to continue her research at Erasmus Medical Center in Rotterdam, focusing on ‘The role of mTOR inhibitor drugs, alone or in combination with dopamine agonists and / or IGF1-receptor antagonists, in the treatment of neuroendocrine tumors’. I would like to encourage all young investigators to consider applying for this prestigious award in the future.

Philippe Ruszniewski, MD, PhD, Chairman ENETS
7th Annual ENETS Conference 2010 – Record interest, record attendance

Up until the opening of the 7th Annual ENETS Conference, held in Berlin 11–12 March, organizers were receiving queries from interested participants who had not yet registered but wanted to attend the world-class lectures. Approximately 1,300 people attended the conference and feedback so far has been positive, with many participants citing the quality of the lectures, as well as meeting organization.

Annual Conference Coordination:
Małgorzata Szott-Emus (project manager)
Elizabeth Zach (development and communications)
Corinna Böcker (project assistance)
Simon Hirschmann (technical management)
Carola Mascow (project assistance and logistics)

Ashley Grossman, speaker of the ENETS Advisory Board, was also a discussant during the Novartis symposium on 11 March.

The coordinators of the ENETS Centers of Excellence pilot project were recognized during the conference. From left to right: Andreas Lang, GSG project organizer; Martyn Caplin, Royal Free Hospital, London; Wouter de Herder, Erasmus Medical Center, Rotterdam; Philippe Ruszniewski, Hôpital Beaujon, Clichy, France; Barbro Eriksson, Uppsala University Hospital, Sweden; Bertram Wiedenmann, Charité Universitätsmedizin, Berlin; Ulrich Knigge, Rigshospitalet, Copenhagen.

Gianfranco Delle Fave, as he co-chaired, with Robert Jensen, a session on gastric NET case presentations.

Günter Klöppel chaired a popular and informal ‘Meet the Professor’ session with Kjell Öberg, focusing on diagnostic clinical and biological problems.

Harvey Turner presented on PRRT during a session on nuclear medicine. It was his first time attending an ENETS Annual Conference.
This year’s conference attracted nearly 150 abstracts, which will be published later this year in *Neuroendocrinology*. The meeting also drew strong interest from the pharmaceutical community: typically, we have had two main sponsors, whereas this year, the conference was sponsored by five firms.

The conference also included the annual gathering of all ENETS members for its General Assembly meeting. During the meeting, ENETS Executive Committee elections were held. The new chairman of ENETS, Philippe Ruszniewski, was sworn in and, in doing so, thanked Guido Rindi, who had served as chairman from 2008 until 2010. Guido will now serve as vice chair, an office he held from 2004 until 2006. The Executive Committee expanded, as well, from seven members to nine, initiating Beata Kos-Kudła and Ramon Salazar as Committee members. Bertram Wiedenmann was re-elected as Society treasurer, and Dermot O’Toole was also re-elected to his post as member. He has been active as coordinator for the ENETS task force Centers of Excellence.
On the second day of the conference, the Society conferred its annual Life Achievement Award on Enrico Solcia of Pavia, Italy. His former student, Guido Rindi, proudly gave the dedication, recalling his mentor’s patience and humor through the years, as well as ongoing contributions to the research field, including participation at the 2009 ENETS Advisory Board conference in Rome.

Other awards during the conference included travel grants for the following young investigators: Paolo Dalino Ciaramella, Italy; Dorota Dworakowska, United Kingdom; Eric Liu, USA; Carla Pieterman, The Netherlands; Carly Schnaid, United Kingdom; and Viktor Shkarban, Ukraine. Prizes for the best abstracts were also given out to the fol-
The Society also presented its first ‘Excellence in Translational Medicine in GEP-NET Disease’ award. Learn more about the recipient, Dr. Cristina De Martino, on the last page of this edition of the Newsletter, and be sure to mark your calendar for next year’s ENETS Annual Conference, which will be held in Lisbon, Portugal.

Tom O’Donisio’s lecture on treatment of 90Y-Edotreotide (OctreoTher®/Onatob®) was a late addition to the scientific program, but rounded out well the session on top news in NETs, 2009–2010.

Ulrich-Frank Pape and Christian Arnold audited the Society’s financial status for 2009 and reported approval during the General Assembly meeting.

Marianne Pavel lectured on therapeutic dilemmas during the session on ENETS recommendations for new trials.

Novartis, the conference’s platinum sponsor, exhibited its NET Alliance during the event.

Mauro Papotti and Enzo Domenichini strike a pose during a coffee break.
Pfizer Oncology was a new sponsor of the ENETS Annual Conference and also exhibited at the meeting.

Guido Rindi stepped down as ENETS chairman this year, ceding the position to Philippe Ruszniewski during the Society’s General Assembly meeting.

John Ramage and Ulrich-Frank Pape moderated the conference’s final session, on top news in NETs, 2009–2010.

Ramon Salazar, Wouter de Herder and Diego Ferone take a break from the science. Ramon joined the ENETS Executive Committee as a member, and Wouter stepped down as vice chairman. He had previously served as the Society’s chairman-elect and chairman. Diego Ferone sits on the Society’s Advisory Board.

Reza Kianmanesh hosted one of the ‘Meet the Professor’ sessions, on complex surgery. This year’s conference was the first time the Society offered these limited attendance, early morning sessions. Geared to young investigators, the sessions attracted larger crowds than expected and will be a likely feature at future conferences.

Anthony Dixon of Sirtex speaks with a conference delegate. Sirtex was a bronze sponsor of this year’s conference and looks to continue supporting the Society’s activities.
Guido Rindi, left, presented his mentor and former professor Enrico Solcia, center, with the 2010 ENETS Life Achievement Award. Philippe Ruszniewski was on hand to give Enrico a medal signifying his achievements in neuroendocrine tumor research.

Wouter de Herder, who stepped down this year as vice chairman of the ENETS Executive Committee, introduced the ENETS 2010 Life Achievement Award during the conference with a look back at past recipients.

Richard Warner points to the poster submitted by fellow researchers in his department at Mt. Sinai hospital. Michael Shafir smiles for the camera.

Staffan Welin and Laura Tang moderated the presentation of select clinical research abstracts. The conference attracted 164 submissions.

Riad Younes was a featured discussant during the Novartis symposium, ‘The road ahead for NET therapy’.

James Yao gestures to a poster submitted by him and Kjell Öberg. James also moderated a ‘Meet the Professor’ session on clinical trials during the conference.
Maria Cristina de Martino was awarded this year the first-ever ENETS Excellence in Translational Medicine in GEP-NET Disease. She plans to use the funding to support research she is carrying out at Erasmus Medical Center in Rotterdam. Here, she discusses her work and how she ended up in the NET field:

What sparked your interest in NET research?
I am fascinated by the natural sciences. While studying, I became interested in medical research. I was captivated by the idea that by understanding human disease pathogenesis, we could improve the management of patients. I found endocrinology and oncology the most attractive medical subjects. I was fascinated by the correlation between complex phenotypes and hormonal alterations. The ideal example is how clinical features can be explained by molecular and biochemical alterations. I am fascinated by oncology because I found cancer proliferation one of “the paradoxes of life”: the anarchic and egoistic proliferation of a subset of cells that can destroy the environment that essentially sustains its own life. I consider the development of new treatment options for tumor patients one of the most challenging for a medical researcher and one of the major aims in my professional life. The chance offered to me by Prof. Annamaria Colao and Prof. Gaetano Lombardi to work on NETs represented for me the perfect way to increase my expertise in endocrinology and oncology.

The fellowship will aid you in reaching your current goals.
What are your long-term plans?
I would like to be a successful translational researcher in the field of endocrinology and oncology. I would be pleased to continue to work with Prof. Colao and other Italian colleagues, as well as with my Dutch supervisor, Leo J. Hofland. I would like to work with other endocrinology and oncology research groups and, in the future, guide research projects and to supervise and teach younger researchers and doctors.

Who has been most influential in your work and why?
Annamaria Colao has certainly been influential in my professional life and also all her coworkers. Rosario Pivonello was my supervisor for several years and he is the most influential person in my work. We have followed-up with many patients and have written many papers and worked on many projects. He contributes to my development as a researcher. Since in The Netherlands, Leo J. Hofland and some of his coworkers have become essential to my training. I thank all these people and others not only for their educational role in my professional life, but also because we share the passion for medical research.

What are your personal interests outside of science?
I love to draw, to paint and to garden (although I just have small house plants). I like to play sports, read and cook for friends. I travel a lot between Rotterdam, my family in Naples and my Italian husband who lives in Paris, where he is finishing his Ph.D. in economics. Although it is not ideal, it has given my husband and me the opportunity to experience different cultures and to learn different languages. My husband and I spend part of our free time meeting friends. We feel we have three homes with precious friendships and the chance to start new ones and these cultural exchanges help us be more adaptable and open.