EAGEN and UEG: A Long-Term Partnership with a Focus on Education

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Abstract

EAGEN is one of the 7 founding sisters and an ordinary member society of UEG. EAGEN members have contributed significantly to the development of UEG in leading positions within UEG. The significant impact of UEG board members on science, education, and organization of European gastroenterology is demonstrated by the remarkable list of EAGEN board members who have received major UEG awards or prizes. The focus of EAGEN within UEG has been on postgraduate education. In this function, EAGEN has developed educational formats which after their establishment were handed over to UEG. EAGEN has established itself as an important provider of education in gastroenterology including pancreatic-biliary diseases, GI oncology, endoscopic procedures, nutrition, and intestinal microbiology. EAGEN has the goal to identify educational needs, fill existing gaps in medical education, and advance the quality of education. To fulfill these tasks, EAGEN is in close cooperation with the UEG education committee and UEG member societies. EAGEN puts a focus on reduction of pan-European health inequalities, provision of equal opportunity, promotion of young talent, and improvement of clinical standards and guidelines.

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Introduction

EAGEN is one of currently 17 ordinary member societies of UEG. EAGEN has not only been one of the 7 founding sister societies of UEG but has also continued to contribute significantly to the development of UEG. Several members of EAGEN have had leading positions within UEG (Table 1) and have in these functions played a big role in advancing UEG from a loose federation of European specialist societies to a well-organized and highly competitive international society. The significant impact of UEG board members on science, education, and organization of European gastroenterology is demonstrated by the remarkable list of EAGEN board members who have received major UEG awards or prizes (Table 2).

EAGEN: Developer of Educational Formats

The focus of EAGEN within UEG has been on postgraduate education. In this function, EAGEN has developed educational formats which after their establishment were handed over to UEG.

In the 1990s, EAGEN (then EAGE) was assigned by UEG (then UEGF) to establish and organize a *Postgraduate Course on occasion of UEGweek*. When in the follow-

Table 1. EAGEN members who have served in leading positions in UEG

UEG position	Year	Name
Chairmen of council and presidents	2002	Christoph Beglinger
	2004	Peter Malfertheiner
	2008–2009	Juan Malagelada
	2012–2014	Michael Farthing
General secretary	1996–2005	Juan Malagelada
	2006–2013	Christoph Beglinger
Chair education committee	2005–2006	Peter Malfertheiner
	2007–2010	Lars Lundell
	2011–2014	Marco Bruno
	2015–2018	Heinz Hammer
Editor, UEG journal	2013–2018	Jan Tack

Table 2. EAGEN members who were awarded UEG prizes

UEG award or prize	Year	Name
Life time achievement award	2009	Guido Tytgat
	2010	Juan Malagelada
	2012	Jean-Paul Galmiche
	2013	Giovanni Gasbarrini
	2014	Christoph Beglinger
	2016	Günter Krejs
	2019	Peter Malfertheiner
Research prize	2015	Jan Tack

ing years, the organization of UEGweek was centralized EAGEN handed over the postgraduate course to be continued and developed further by UEG.

EAGEN has also, together with ASNEMGE, which later developed into the National Societies forum, developed the “*Summer School*” which is a Postgraduate Course specifically designed for gastroenterology and hepatology trainees. In the early 2010s, the Summer School was handed over to be continued by the UEG Education Committee.

In the year 1999, the *European Bridging Meeting* was established by Peeter Malfertheiner on behalf of the EAGEN and has since continued on a yearly basis, with the 21st Bridging Meeting having been organized in November 2019 in Warsaw. This educational format has a focus on research and was originally designed to serve as a bridge between researchers from former eastern and western European countries. In the last years, the Bridging Meeting has refocused on serving as a bridge between young researchers (fellows), providing them an opportu-

nity to present their research, and the leaders in the field of gastroenterology and hepatology research, with attendance from all parts of Europe. For this important contribution to the development of young researchers, the Bridging Meeting has received financial support by the UEG education committee for several consecutive years.

A very important initiative addressing both medical professionals and the lay population is the *Healthy Stomach Initiative*, in which EAGEN members have played an important role since the start of this initiative. The initiative has received endorsement by the European Helicobacter Study Group, World Gastroenterology Organization as well as several national societies.

EAGEN: Provider of Postgraduate Education Within and Outside of UEG, Within and Outside of Europe

In the face of rapidly increasing medical knowledge and an ever-increasing array of diagnostic and therapeutic opportunities and offers from the medical and the paramedical field, continuous medical education is an obligation, which is owed by doctors to their patients in specific and to third-party payers of health care and society in general. Continuous education has to provide doctors with the tools necessary to provide the best possible health care options to the patients, considering the variable constraints of health care in different regions of Europe and the world, to understand the challenges of the future and to provide the research tools required for addressing them, and to make doctors fit for steering the public discussion of the future directions and developments of health care within their home countries, the different regions of Europe and beyond [1]. For this objective, EAGEN members have been very active within the UEG structure which is responsible for postgraduate education, the Education Committee.

The Education Committee, in which the 17 member societies and the National Societies Forum are equally represented, has a central role in the structure of the UEG. Its objectives focus on developing quality controlled initiatives in postgraduate teaching and advancing e-learning. These goals shall be reached by strengthening the member associations as the providers of multidisciplinary postgraduate training.

Peter Malfertheiner was the first Chairman of the UEG Education Committee, which is a position elected by the UEG Meeting of Members (formerly the General Assembly). He realized that setting up a coordinated European Education programme required coordination of many

such activities that had already been undertaken by members of the Federation. The subspecialist societies such as endoscopy, surgery, liver, pediatrics, and others were conducting solid and well-established programs with a pan-European outlook. It was apparent that the Education Committee should collaborate and complement these existing activities rather than compete with them. The next elected chairmen of the Education Committee all had an EAGEN background (Table 1), and they were successful in leading the development of UEG educational activities, increasing the number of European training projects and harmonizing professional education throughout Europe. During the term of Heinz Hammer e-learning, activities of UEG were significantly advanced, including successful online teaching formats such as the “Mistakes in ...” series to which EAGEN board members have contributed [2]. Many of the contents of UEG e-learning are free for registered users [3].

EAGEN, very often in cooperation with other UEG member societies or national societies, has been very successful in offering approximately 10 educational postgraduate courses per year, covering a broad range of topics of the upper and lower GI tract, including nutrition, oncology, and surgery, and with a geographical focus on Central and Eastern Europe. Every year between 3 and 5 of these courses have been supported by educational UEG grants. These postgraduate courses in general receive excellent reviews on their contents, design, educational methods, and faculty, both by UEG reviewers and by the audiences. Different educational formats, like state of the art lectures, case-based lectures, interactive learning methods, question-answer sessions and hands-on training, have been used in these courses. Target audiences have included general practitioners and specialists, clinicians and researchers.

Currently EAGEN, together with an industry sponsor, is in the first year of development and implementation of an online education format, which allows to reach out globally; in fact as concerns about the impact of traveling on environment increases, this in fact may be of great importance and set an example for environment-conscious future postgraduate teaching.

EAGEN: Disseminator and Creator of Guidelines

When the UEG council started its initiative to support the dissemination and the development of guidelines, the EAGEN fully supported this. Within the past several years, EAGEN, with UEG support, has offered several

guideline dissemination courses and is currently the driving force in the development of a UEG-sponsored multi-society and multinational guideline for breath tests.

EAGEN and Its Official Journal

Publications play an important role in education. For this purpose, EAGEN in the past has had cooperation with the *European Journal of Gastroenterology and Hepatology* and now with *Digestive Diseases* to serve as the official journal of EAGEN.

Summary

EAGEN has established itself as an important European provider of education in gastroenterology including pancreatico-biliary diseases, GI oncology, endoscopic procedures, nutrition, and intestinal microbiology. EAGEN has the goal to identify educational needs, fill existing gaps in medical education, and advance the quality of education. To fulfill these tasks, EAGEN is in close cooperation with the UEG education committee and UEG member societies. EAGEN puts a focus on reduction of pan-European health inequalities, provision of equal opportunity, promotion of young talent, and improvement of clinical standards and guidelines. It aims to reach this goal by innovative approaches to teaching, including online-teaching, and by disseminating and creating guidelines.

Disclosure Statement

The author has been secretary of EAGEN since 2000 and served in several positions in UEG, among them chair of the UEG education committee from 2015 to 2018.

Funding Sources

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