



23rd October 2020

Dear Neurodiab Members,

First, I would like to send my greetings and good wishes to you and your loved ones at this difficult time. Let me share with you some thoughts after the Neurodiab and EASD virtual meetings.

Despite the short time available for the organization of the virtual meeting, after President Orbán's decision to close Hungary's borders, the positive feedbacks from many of you make me think that the virtual meeting went very well. No technical problems occurred. The recorded videos done by Stand-Art have been appreciated as well.

This year we had only 40 presentations in comparison to about 80 last year in Sitges, and a limited number of registrations (85).

The uncertainty related to COVID-19 situation, the distant time-zones between continents, the neuropathy sessions of 2020 Korean Diabetes Association that took place at the same time, the relatively high cost of registration also for young participants might have discouraged some people from attending the meeting. I hoped until the end to be able to have a face-to-face meeting; now I must admit that an earlier decision for a virtual meeting would have favored a greater number of submissions and participants.

Nonetheless, travel restrictions to Hungary have been introduced on September 1<sup>st</sup>, while the ban on medical congresses became valid on September 10<sup>th</sup>. Despite these changes, absolutely no money was lost due to cancellation of accommodations. Although the final balance is not yet available, it is sure that NEURODIAB will have some reserves.

On the other hand, the presentations were of high quality and the engagement was very good. I was particularly pleased to see that more than 60% of abstracts were presented by young researchers, in line with the Neurodiab tradition.

**Thus, on behalf of the Executive Committee, I would like to sincerely thank all the participants and presenters for their contributions to this unusual virtual meeting.** Never as in this time, do we need everyone's efforts to pursue the Neurodiab mission.

The Neurodiab symposium, which we organized inside the EASD meeting, had 300 viewers and has received 1000 views so far. The oral session on diabetic neuropathy received over 3200 views, and the two poster sessions around 1000 and 750 views, respectively. Consequently, there was some space in the EASD meeting for diabetic neuropathy and a significant attention to neuropathy issues from EASD participants. Their evaluations/comments were pretty good. Nonetheless, we must work to gain greater visibility for diabetic neuropathy in future EASD meetings, as it deserves.

The Annual General Assembly has given me the opportunity to face (virtually) the thoughts and feelings of Neurodiab members and to realize that we need a better and more effective communication, mostly within the Executive Committee and among all Neurodiab members.



I'm committed to favoring this exchange of ideas and proposals among Neurodiab senior and younger members and participants and to promoting collaborative work in line with the Neurodiab mission.

Thus, your contribution to Neurodiab life is welcome.

I think that the areas where our efforts should be oriented are:

- to have greater efforts from all members and the Executive committee at securing greater funding from industry and other sources. Most of the points below can be helped by the availability of greater funding;
- to focus on the quality of program in the next Neurodiab meetings to guarantee always the presence of the most innovative issues and researchers in the diabetic neuropathy field;
- to implement the use of Neurodiab website whose availability is made possible thanks to the past Chair, Simona Frontoni: this time has shown how digital tools are powerful and this potential use of our website should be exploited to the maximum;
- to take the opportunity of many members outside Europe to value their research experience, and to confront the regional differences in policies and clinical implementation of knowledge; the 30-years Neurodiab history has been possible and reached great results also for the contribution of many members from the United States and Asia. This must continue;
- to encourage applications for prizes with regular alerts (this year we had no applications) and to increase membership (many presenters with the needed requisites do not apply and should be informed about that possibility);
- to provide educational activities mainly through the website;
- to keep the attention to young researchers and to their education and enhancement as a main mission of Neurodiab and the only insurance for the future.

Starting from the lessons we have learned this year, and in the absence of a COVID-19 containment, I'll propose to the Executive Committee to consider planning a virtual meeting for the next 31st Annual Meeting. If there are favorable indicators for a face to face meeting, clearly this option will be explored as well.

Professor Triantafyllos Didangelos is already working on the organization of the meeting in Thessaloniki in a wonderful venue for 27-30 August 2021. We will kindly ask him to get insurance coverage for the Hotel in case the COVID-19 situation should cancel or postpone it.

Finally, I sincerely hope that by next August things will be a lot better and life will gradually come to normal. However, there is no guarantee and all other possible scenarios must be considered when planning our next meeting. Perhaps COVID-19 has brought out the needs of Neurodiab for keeping its mission and improving its future. Perhaps this crisis may serve for a greater awareness of what we can do for Neurodiab survival and regeneration. Please do contact me if you have any comments and ideas.

I wish you and all your families a healthy remainder of 2020 and in the new year as well.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Kempler