ESR launches Call for a European Action Plan for Medical Imaging

Europe’s radiologists call on EU policy makers and stakeholders to join forces to improve patient safety and quality of care for Europe’s citizens

Brussels, November 6, 2014. Members of the European Parliament, representatives of the European Commission, patient groups, medical associations, hospital managers, industry and media joined the European Society of Radiology (ESR) for the launch of the ESR Call for a European Action Plan for Medical Imaging at the European Parliament in Brussels on November 4, 2014. The aim of the call is to demonstrate the current heterogeneities among EU Member States in regard to quality of care and patient safety and to call on the European institutions and relevant stakeholders to work together to implement much needed reforms.

The host Mrs. Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Quaestor of the European Parliament, commended the ESR initiative as ‘an excellent example showing that Europe cares for its patients and that EU activities can have a direct benefit for Europe’s citizens.’ ‘This is an ambitious plan, but in a combined effort it can bring about change and serve as a role model for European initiatives in other areas’, she said, emphasising the good working relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission. Mrs. Morin-Chartier was joined for the event by colleagues from the European Parliament, including MEPs Nathalie Griesbeck and Patrizia Toia.

From left to right: Prof. Hans-Ulrich Kauczor, Chairman of the ESR Research Committee (Heidelberg, Germany); ESR 1st Vice-President Prof. Luis Donoso (Barcelona, Spain); ESR President Prof. Lorenzo Bonomo (Rome, Italy); Host Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Quaestor of the European Parliament; Nathalie Griesbeck, Member of the European Parliament; and ESR Past-President Prof. Guy Frija (Paris, France).

ESR President Prof. Lorenzo Bonomo from Rome/Italy presented the ESR’s flagship initiatives in the areas of quality and safety, education and training, research, and eHealth. He emphasised the importance of EuroSafe Imaging, a multi-stakeholder alliance set up by the ESR to improve medical radiation protection as well as direct communication and collaboration with patients, which the ESR has achieved by creating a dedicated patient advisory group for medical imaging.

‘We feel this is the right time to launch this call for action and to demonstrate the need for harmonisation, with the new Parliament and European Commission just in place’, he said. The event came at a timely moment also given the recently adopted Opinion of the independent Expert Panel on the EU Agenda on Quality of Health Care and Patient Safety put forward by the European Commission Directorate General Health and Consumers as well as related recommendations for action, to which the ESR fully subscribes.
Practical examples of existing heterogeneities in the field of medical imaging were given by Prof. Guy Frija, ESR Past-President from Paris/France, who highlighted the need for modernising imaging equipment across Europe which would bring about an immediate decrease of patients’ radiation exposure, as well as the importance of developing and politically supporting key quality and safety indicators.

The ESR understands that quality of care and patient safety can only improve if we invest in education and training, thus we have developed a European Training Curriculum for Radiology and the European Diploma in Radiology in order to support harmonisation efforts and we call upon the European institutions to endorse these and to introduce mandatory continuing medical education throughout Europe’, he added. He also called on the various DGs of the EC and encouraged their collaboration in order to ensure the creation of synergies to the maximum benefit of Europe’s patients.

Prof. Hans Ulrich Kauczor, ESR Research Committee Chair from Heidelberg/Germany, called upon the EU institutions to recognise the importance of medical imaging in personalised medicine and underlined the need to standardise and validate imaging biomarkers as well as to establish a European plan to develop medical imaging biobanks that can be annotated to existing ‘omics’ biobanks. Medical imaging needs in the area of IT and eHealth were explained by Prof. Luis Donoso, ESR 1st Vice-President from Barcelona/Spain, who underscored the importance of setting up a European legal framework for teleradiology to ensure quality and safety as well as to regulate liability issues. He introduced the development of a Clinical Decision Support System (CDS) as a flagship project of the ESR to increase the use of clinical imaging guidelines, which will facilitate a reduction in unnecessary imaging exams and improve quality of care. The endorsement of the European institutions will be crucial in order to support the introduction of the system in daily practice.

Patient representative Erik Briers, Ex officio Board Member of Europa Uomo, stated that both patients and radiologists needed education and training, and pointed out that the health literacy of patients was a shared responsibility. Dr. Pascal Garel, CEO of the European Hospital and Healthcare Federation (HOPE), underscored the importance of the ESR Call for a European Action Plan for Medical Imaging initiative as a ‘right way to achieve change’ and encouraged joint action. Dr. Andrzej Rys, Director for Health Systems and Products at the European Commission DG Consumers and Health, welcomed the ESR initiative as timely, pointed out that it corresponds closely to the EC’s priorities and that now an adequate framework for incorporating it needed to be found.

The ESR Call for a European Action Plan for Medical Imaging to improve quality of care and patient safety is endorsed by 41 national societies of radiology (including societies from 26 EU Member States) as well as by all 15 European subspecialty societies of radiology.

For further information on the ESR Call for a European Action Plan for Medical Imaging documents, please click here.

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The European Society of Radiology (ESR) is an apolitical, non-profit organisation, dedicated to promoting and coordinating the scientific, philanthropic, intellectual and professional activities of radiology in all European countries. The Society’s mission at all times is to serve the healthcare needs of the general public through the support of science, teaching and research and the quality of service in the field of radiology. The ESR is the European body representing the radiology profession with more than 62,000 individual members and acts as the umbrella organisation of all national radiological societies in Europe as well as Europe’s subspecialty organisations in the field of radiology.