

IX LATVIAN GASTROENTEROLOGY CONGRESS

Aleksejs Derovs^{1,2}, Jeļena Derova^{1,3}, and Juris Pokrotnieks^{1,4}

¹ Rīga Stradiņš University, 16 Dzirciema Str., Rīga, LV-1007, LATVIA

² Rīga East Clinical University Hospital, 2 Hipokrāta Str., Rīga, LATVIA

³ Latvian Maritime Medicine Centre, 23 Patversmes Str., Rīga, LATVIA

⁴ Pauls Stradiņš Clinical University Hospital, 13 Pilsoņu Str., Rīga, LATVIA

IX Latvian Gastroenterology Congress with international participation was held on 7 December 2019 in Rīga (Latvia) gathering 1133 delegates (not including industry members) from Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and a number of other countries.

The idea of organising such a big gastroenterology event devoted to domestic Latvian doctors appeared in the 1990s. However, due to several technical issues the first Latvian Gastroenterology Congress was organised only in 2003. The congress founder was Professor Juris Pokrotnieks, who was the scientific leader and driving force of the Congress Organizing Committee. Currently the Congress is organised by two Latvian non-profit organisations: the Digestive Disease Society (in Latvian, *Gremošanas slimību biedrība*) and the Gastroenterology Support Society (in Latvian, *Gastroenteroloģijas atbalsta biedrība*). The major purpose of these societies is to highlight all the gastroenterology insights for the physicians. These organisations are actively communicating with the leading Latvian medical associations, building up the platform for the Congress.

Gastroenterology is one of the biggest chapters in internal medicine, which is related to different organs, i.e. esophagus, stomach, liver, pancreas, bowels. This is why organisation of such an event was crucial for Latvian medicine in general. The first Congress in 2003, which started this gastroenterology congress tradition in Latvia, saw a rather small number of participants — just about 400 medical practitioners, but already in 2009 this number reached 1000 persons. Since then, the Congress usually gathers approximately 1000–1100 participants, which places it to the top of the medical congresses in the Eastern Europe. The current, IX Latvian Gastroenterology Congress attracted more than 1100 participants.

Everlasting interest in different gastroenterology topics is supported by a variety of different activities prior to the Latvian Gastroenterology Congress, as well as during the event: enriched scientific programme in the Plenary Hall,

pointing at a continuous growth in the area of gastroenterology, hepatology and endoscopy, i.e. discussing thrilling achievements and breakthroughs in the fields of gastroenterological disease screening, diagnostics, and treatment; many satellite symposiums parallel to the Plenary session; live broadcasts from hospitals; discussion panel led by opinion leaders from the all of the world etc. Since the first Congress, we had invited lecturers from the Netherlands, Great Britain, France, Sweden, Norway, Russian Federation, Israel, Japan, Italy, Germany and many other countries. IX Latvian Gastroenterology Congress was not an exception. Among the participants there were invited foreign lecturers from Israel, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Italy, Greece, Russian Federation, France.

The Congress was opened by the rector of Rīga Stradiņš University Professor Aigars Pēteršons, who was emphasising the important role of the Congress in gastroenterology field not only in Latvia, but also in Eastern Europe. While exploring current targets and clinical trends, many lectures in the Plenary Hall were devoted to the mayor trends in gastroenterology. Professor Juris Pokrotnieks (Latvia) presented a topic about clinical trials and trends in gastroenterology pointing at the place of our research in gastroenterology. Professor Ludmila Viksna (Latvia) based her speech on the topic of parasitic diseases of the hepato-biliary tract and their relevance in Europe, since this topic has become topical in the European Union and in Latvia as well. Taking into account that one of the greatest interests in modern gastroenterology now is microbiota (its clinical association with different diseases, biomarkers, genetic association, diversity etc.), Associated Professor Aleksejs Derovs (Latvia) presented a lecture on targeting microbiota, particularly focusing on its clinical implementation up today. Professor Luigi Ricciardiello (Italy), presented the state-of-the-art lecture on the current trends in digestive oncology, taking into consideration that digestive oncology is still one of the biggest healthcare problems in European Union. Associated Professor Artūrs Ozoliņš (Latvia) closed the first section of



Opening of the Congress by Professor Juris Pokrotnieks.



Rector of the Riga Stradiņš University Professor Aigars Pētersons and Professor Joost P. H. Drenth (The Netherlands).

the plenary session with the state-of-the-art lecture in general surgery, emphasising options, which are available in Latvia.

Next section of the plenary session was opened by the lecture of Professor Joost P. H. Drenth (The Netherlands), who is one of the opinion leaders in gastroenterology and hepatology in European Union and now is Editor-In-Chief of *United European Gastroenterology Journal*. Professor presented a talk devoted to current trends in autoimmune and cholestatic liver diseases. In addition to the above mentioned topics, it is worth mentioning *Dr. med.* Antonio Riva's (United Kingdom) lecture on alcohol-related liver disease, focused on immune markers of disease severity, Professor Marvin Edeas' (France) report on microbiota, metabolites and mitochondria, Professor Indra Zelčņa's (Latvia) lecture based on HIV presentations in gastrointestinal tract, *Dr.* Jeļena Deroņa's (Latvia) lecture on standard and non-standard mistakes in gastrointestinal endoscopy, Associated Professor Aldis Puķītis' (Latvia) presentation with a topic devoted to direct visualisation cholangioscopy, and Associated Professor Harijs Čerņevskis' (Latvia) presentation with a topic "Gastroenterology and nephrology cross-talks". However, this is just a brief overview of many highly important topics presented by different lecturers — scientists, clinicians — which were discussed in the Plenary Hall.



Plenary session.



Satellite symposium.

In parallel to the plenary session, six different satellite symposia took place in the Small Hall of the Congress Centre. Session in the Small Hall was started with international satellite symposium, which was devoted to the secretion problems of the pancreas. It was continued by international satellite symposium about rational use of non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs in gastroenterology. During this symposium, new Latvian clinical guidelines for clinicians were presented, pointing at possible benefits and risks of using non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs. These guidelines were developed by our local opinion leaders supported by the Digestive Diseases Society. During the symposium, one of the invited lecturers, Professor Leonid B. Lazebnik (Russian Federation), presented his newly developed classification for gastrointestinal drug lesions, in particular, international trends, risk stratifications and decision-making. This symposium was followed by the 4th International Enteroscopy and Capsule Endoscopy Workshop "East Meets West", during which one of the leading clinicians and scientists in the field professor Rami Eliakim (Israel) presented the state-of-the-art lecture in capsule endoscopy. It is worth mentioning the lecture by *Dr.* Ilze Apine about MRI beyond the reach of endoscope, by *Dr.* Eduards Krustiņš, on contra in capsule endoscopy, and by Associated Professor Aleksejs Derovs, on small bowel cleansing prior to capsule endoscopy. Next international satellite symposium was devoted to biologics in inflammatory bowel disease. Professor Gerassimos J. Mantzaris (Greece) in his lecture discussed where do we stand with vedolizumab in inflammatory bowel disease: RCTs and real-world data in ulcerative coli-

tis and Crohn's disease. Professor Juris Pokrotnieks' (Latvia) report was on the situation concerning inflammatory bowel disease treatment in Latvia. Satellite symposium session was continued with a symposium devoted to how important is the intestinal microflora. Satellite symposium programme was finished with the symposium devoted to vitamin D big doses efficacy and safety, during which all the potential risks and benefits for the host using big and small doses of vitamin D were discussed.

In addition, it is necessary to mention the industry exhibition including many different local and international companies, in two floors of Congress Centre foyer, which provided the latest information in different drug therapies and technological advances in gastroenterology.

Congress delegates as usual were able to submit their abstracts. Evaluation was granted by the highly respected Scientific Committee of the Congress consisting of opinion leaders from different countries including USA, Germany, France, UK, etc. It helped to ensure high quality of scien-

tific materials being brought to the stage, as well as abstract evaluation. The subject matter, study design, and relevance to the target audience are our main criteria for decision making. Exciting innovation of the current congress is the special edition of the *Proceedings of the Latvian Academy of Science. Section B* (2020, Nr. 2, see <https://content.sciendo.com/view/journals/prolas/prolas-overview.xml>) which collected papers (original publications, reviews, case reports etc.) in gastroenterology field brought by our local and foreign researchers. Thanks to this, several authors selected by organisers had an opportunity to expand their abstract to the full article and published it in this special issue.

Presently organisers of the Latvian Gastroenterology Congress offer additional exciting events for the participants like international symposia, discussions, industry exhibitions, and international workshops, which helps to build stable meaningful relationships between physicians and academic researchers, as well with industry alliances.

The next, X Latvian Gastroenterology Congress, is planned to be held in Rīga at 4 December 2021.

IX LATVIJAS GASTROENTEROLOĢIJAS KONGRESS

Pirmais Latvijas Gastroenteroloģijas kongress tika organizēts 2003. gadā. Ideja organizēt tik lielu gastroenteroloģijas pasākumu, kas veltīts Latvijas ārstiem, radās 20. gs. 90. gados, taču vairāku tehnisku iemeslu dēļ to noorganizēt agrāk nebija iespējams. Šobrīd kongresu organizē divas Latvijas nevalstiskās organizācijas: Gremošanas slimību biedrība un Gastroenteroloģijas atbalsta biedrība. Šo organizāciju pamatmērķis ir izcelt svarīgākās gastroenteroloģijas atziņas un parādīt tās ārstiem. Sākot ar 2009. gadu, kongress pulcē ap 1000–1100 dalībnieku, tādējādi šis pasākums iekļaujas Austrumeiropas medicīnas kongresu topā. IX Latvijas Gastroenteroloģijas kongress ar starptautisku dalību, kas notika 2019. gada 7. decembrī, pulcēja 1133 delegātu. Interesi par pasākumu vairoja dažādas aktivitātes gan pirms kongresa, gan arī pasākuma laikā. Paralēli sekciju sēdēm Lielajā zālē tika novadīti arī seši satelītsimpoziji, vairāki no tiem bija starptautiski. Kongresa zinātnisko komiteju pārstāv viedokļu līderi no vairākām valstīm, ieskaitot ASV, Vāciju, Franciju, Lielbritāniju u.c. Tas palīdz nodrošināt dalīšanos ar vērtīgu zinātnisko materiālu referātos, kā arī augstas kvalitātes tēzu un publikāciju izdošanu. Viena no svarīgākajām šī kongresa novitātēm bija specializētais "Latvijas Zinātņu Akadēmijas Vēstu" laidieni (*Proceedings of the Latvian Academy of Science. Section B*, 2020, Nr. 2, sk.: <https://content.sciendo.com/view/journals/prolas/prolas-overview.xml>), kas deva iespēju labāko tēzu autoriem paplašināt savas tēzes, veidojot rakstu ar sekojošu publikāciju. Kongresa organizatori dalībniekiem piedāvāja arī citus interesantus pasākumus, piemēram, paneldiskusijas un nozares izstādes. Kongress palīdz izveidot jēgpilnas, stabilas attiecības starp ārstiem un akadēmisko personālu, kā arī ar nozares aliansēm.