

I am grateful to the Scottish Radiology Society for awarding me a travel bursary to attend the European Congress of Radiology (ECR) from the 1st to 5th March 2017. The ECR is the flagship scientific meeting of the European Society of Radiology (ESR) and is held annually in Vienna.

As a final year trainee, this was the first time I had attended ECR. The scale of the congress is impressive, with just shy of 27,000 people in attendance. The theme of this year's congress was the Flower Gardens of Radiology, with a dedication to the youth in radiology. Arriving at the conference venue on the first day one could not fail to be impressed with the scale of the meeting. The congress programme available online in advance was a behemoth document, stretching to 350 pages, reflecting the vast array of educational and scientific sessions on offer. Once familiar with the type of sessions and the format of the conference, and after downloading the ECR App onto my phone, it was relatively easy to plan my programme of sessions for the week, and the apps diary function ensured I was always in the right place at the right time. The breadth and depth of sessions on offer essentially meant that subspecialty conferences take place within the ECR programme, as well as a very wide range of general radiology sessions.

I attended a range of sessions on musculoskeletal imaging and general radiology throughout the five days of ECR. There were a range of interactive sessions, with live audience participation facilitated using the voting section on the App. These sessions were one of the highlights of the conference for me. The Imaging Interpretation Quiz was preceded by its reputation as another highlight, with not a free seat visible in the largest auditorium at the congress. It was billed as one of the 'must-see' events at ECR and it did not disappoint, with a range of interesting cases used to challenge the panellists from various countries, and presented by an entertaining Spanish Radiologist. The 'Beauty of Basic Knowledge: Chest Imaging' series of lectures was another highlight, with brilliantly delivered sessions on the basics of chest x-ray interpretation, a subject I feel that there is always something to be gained from. Throughout the conference there were various educational sessions running as part of the European Diploma in Radiology preparation, with exam sessions also scheduled for the week to test candidates undertaking this qualification. In many European countries no equivalent exam to the FRCR exists, and this diploma aims to establish a standard of excellence for trainees and consultants to demonstrate a benchmark level of competence.

Running in parallel with the educational and scientific sessions at ECR was the commercial trade show which took place in an annex to the main conference venue. All the main radiology equipment suppliers were in attendance and there was a vast array of equipment on display. The trade show afforded the opportunity to look at the new equipment and technologies on offer and to meet company representatives for equipment suppliers we have in our hospitals. The opportunity to meet the reps was particularly useful for facilitating an apps specialist visit in the weeks after the conference to help us resolve some issues with several ultrasound machines we have in the department that were not functioning optimally. The other benefit of the trade show was that most stands had a coffee bar offering free drinks to attendees, something we made good use of.

Following on from my presentation on Informed Consent in Radiology at the 2016 SRS AGM, I submitted a poster on this work to ECR and this was selected for a Voice of EPOS session which gave me an opportunity to give a short oral presentation on the work in the interventional radiology section. This took place on the morning of the final day of the conference. Moderated by a German interventional radiologist, he challenged me as the last presentation of the session to make what he described as “the most boring topic in radiology” interesting. The presentation was only five minutes long but was well received and generated a discussion on the processes surrounding our documentation of consent in the NHS.

As well as the daytime conference activity, the evenings allowed us to spend time socialising with registrar and consultant colleagues who were also in Vienna for the congress. Vienna has a lot to offer in terms of culture and history but we only managed to scratch the surface of this during the short amount of free time we had.

It was impossible to attend every session I had picked out of the conference programme during the five days in Vienna however virtually every session at ECR was recorded live and remains available for delegates to watch later or refer back to.

I would thoroughly recommend that registrar colleagues attend ECR at some point during their training. The conference has so much to offer for all levels of seniority and subspecialty interests, and I am very grateful to the support that the SRS have provided for me to attend in 2017.

Dr Tom Blankenstein
ST5 Clinical Radiology
South East Scotland



