

## ENTOG, European Network of Trainees in Obstetrics and Gynaecology

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### Abstract

ENTOG is the European Network of Trainees in Obstetrics and Gynaecology. This organization aims to represent all European trainee organisations in obstetrics and gynaecology and speaks out on their behalf. Trainees in obstetrics and gynaecology have officially organised meetings for European trainees since 1992, but it was only in 1997 in Athens, that the first ENTOG Council took place. In order to understand each other better and appreciate differences in training, an annual four-day exchange program and a meeting were created to discuss topics related to training and harmonisation, which is the core activity of ENTOG. With the continuous support from the European Board & College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (EBCOG), the network had an exponential growth in the past few years, as shown by the increasing number of countries and trainees represented by ENTOG, as well as by all the training-related published material and newly developed projects for trainees, including those of an intercontinental nature.

*Key words:* Training, Trainees, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, European, Network.

### Introduction

ENTOG is the European Network of Trainees in Obstetrics and Gynaecology (ENTOG Statutes, 2001). It is an independent, nonprofit association which has been founded with the EBCOG support. This organization represents all European organisations of trainees in obstetrics and gynaecology and speaks out on their behalf. ENTOG currently has 29 member countries, corresponding to a total of more than six thousand trainees (Rodriguez *et al.*, 2009) who are represented at the ENTOG Council through their national representatives. The first ENTOG Council was held in Athens in 1997, where the ENTOG statutes were written, defining and electing the first ENTOG Executive-president, secretary-general, treasurer, two members. Applications to become a new member will be subject to approval by majority vote at the Council.

Our aims and objectives are to achieve a better understanding of training in our specialty in different European countries, thus helping to reach a comparable standard of training (ENTOG Statutes, 2001). We also strive to achieve the highest possible standards of training and consequently to improve the quality of medical care given to women and their babies.

ENTOG engages in the following areas of activity to achieve these objectives (Axelsen *et al.*, 1999):

- To promote the creation in all European countries of National Commissions or Networks of trainees.
- To collaborate with EBCOG for the recommendation of the standards required for the training of specialists, and the means of maintaining those standards.
- To examine the content and quality of training in all European countries.

- To collaborate with EBCOG for the recommendation of the criteria to which the specialist training centres should conform.
- To ensure that knowledge and skills of specialist obstetricians and gynaecologists are maintained and updated at regular intervals.
- To promote research by trainees and young gynaecologists/obstetricians and their participation in multi-centre European projects.
- To facilitate the exchange of trainees and young gynaecologists/obstetricians, between training centres throughout Europe to harmonise and improve the quality of training.

Harmonisation of the training procedure and working towards common standards are one of the crucial goals of ENTOG. To this effect, EBCOG developed, amongst others, a basic training logbook that is being used by many countries in its original or adapted version.

As trainees are onboard for a relatively short time, communication with national trainee Societies is of paramount importance. This is achieved by the President's periodic newsletters, by using the website as an easy door to every trainee and with the help from the Senior Societies.

#### **Annual meeting and exchange program**

Trainees in obstetrics and gynaecology have officially organised meetings for European trainees since 1992. In order to understand each other better and appreciate differences in training, an exchange program was developed involving by now 16 Member countries. Trainees from all Member countries are invited for 'a work floor experience' lasting four days. This exchange program is just one example of how we try to improve mobility among our members. Following every exchange, a meeting is organised in the same country to discuss a topic related to training and harmonisation. Topics like research in training, gender in obstetrics and gynaecology and working conditions have so far been discussed in a broad forum (Martens *et al.*, 1998; Sommer, 2007; Martins *et al.*, 2009).

In spite of all the differences in training programs, training length and health care systems the problems encountered during training show many similarities. Therefore our meetings tend to focus on topics that explore these areas and discuss the approaches chosen in either one of our member countries or elsewhere in the world.

Since 2007 we have organised in uneven years our annual meetings and exchange program as our own events. Our close relation with EBCOG, however, resulted in cooperation for the remainder years, as

for the 20<sup>th</sup> EBCOG Congress in Lisbon in 2008, where we were able to organise part of the official program as our own ENTOG session (Martins *et al.*, 2009). This was a great opportunity for ENTOG to reach out to many more trainees, as well as specialists, than otherwise possible.

Benefitting from joining the European congress, ENTOG was able to stimulate research in training by creating an ENTOG prize, to be awarded to the best work on this topic made by a trainee as first author.

ENTOG is actively organizing the future meetings and exchange programs to be held during the annual EBCOG congresses: the XXth in Belgium, the XXIst in the United Kingdom and the XXIIInd in Estonia.

#### **Visitation for basic training and the cooperation with EBCOG**

ENTOG is a full partner of EBCOG, which means that ENTOG has a seat in all of the European Board and College's meetings, working groups, congress committees, and that it also has voting rights at the EBCOG Council.

An important part of this collaboration is the accreditation program for basic training, in which ENTOG sends a representative to join the College at the Hospital's visitation, in countries where there isn't a national visitation system established yet. Trainees are approached and invited to discuss training and opportunities with us. ENTOG hands out a leaflet containing information and instructions on how to join the network and follow-up on projects. During visitation, ENTOG also encourages local trainees to become more actively involved with their national trainee networks.

#### **The european training project**

One of the new projects that the ENTOG Executive has been particularly excited about since the very beginning is the European training project. The idea behind it is basically to offer trainees a list of accredited Centres all over Europe, where trainees could work for some months abroad during their training program. The aim is to promote circulation of trainees inside Europe, leading to harmonisation of our practice. ENTOG will use the website as a "bridge", helping to establish communication between trainees and these volunteer Centres. Each Centre has a responsible person for this project and will be available for contact. ENTOG started by contacting EBCOG-accredited Departments, but will now move on to countries where there is a validated national visitation system. Trainees will be able to

look for specific areas of interest or can choose simply for basic specialty training. The requirements concerning knowledge of the local language, insurance, General Medical Council registration, etc. will be agreed upon individually and the duration of each program will be variable. When trainees return to their home hospitals, they are expected to share their experiences with the staff members, further contributing to standardization of training practice. EBCOG has recently endorsed this project, which is important for sustaining and consolidating this project.

### **The United States – junior fellow congress advisory committee cooperation**

Based upon the feeling that we might greatly benefit from the interaction with a more experienced organization, ENTOG has tried to promote meetings and projects of cooperation between trainees representatives from Europe and the United States of America. The Junior Fellow Congress Advisory Committee (JFCAC) is part of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG). Both groups have visited each other's annual meetings (2006, 2007, 2009 and 2010) and the conclusion was that, in spite of all the differing political and geographical issues, we are frequently dealing with the same difficulties and challenges related to training in obstetrics and gynaecology. Maintaining and developing these bonds is on both sides felt to be a priority, as it might provide an important source for initiating joint programs and surveys. We believe that this cooperation has a major potential in terms of women's global health care.

### **Concluding comments**

ENTOG is the European Network of Trainees in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, created and maintained with the continuous support of the European Board and College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. There are currently 29 member countries, representing over six thousand trainees.

ENTOG organizes an annual four-day exchange program for two trainees from each member country, followed by a meeting where a topic related to training in obstetrics and gynaecology is debated. For the past years, the ENTOG scientific meeting has been

integrated in the European Congress of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, which takes place in even years. The XXth event will take place in Belgium, in May, 2010.

This network has continuously been growing and many new projects are arising, such as the "European Training Project" and the cooperation with our American colleagues. They are expected to contribute to our aims, which are to achieve the highest possible standards of training, to ensure that they are comparable for all our members, and consequently to improve the quality of medical care given to women and their babies.

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### **Contribution to authorship**

All the authors are members of the ENTOG Executive, and all are actively involved in the network activities. All the authors contributed to the creation of these proceedings, namely by conceiving and carrying them out. The paper was written by Dr Nuno Martins in cooperation with the remaining authors.

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