

ON THE X ANNIVERSARY LATVIAN GASTROENTEROLOGY CONGRESS WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION

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The X Anniversary Latvian Gastroenterology Congress with International Participation has been held for the first time for a two-day period (3–4 December 2021). The first day was devoted to international and local satellite symposia, with a total number of ten, which corresponded to the number of Congresses held. The second day of the Congress was devoted to the plenary session. Due to the severe COVID-19 epidemiology situation in Latvia, for the first time in its history since 2003, it was decided to hold the Congress not in person but remotely from the Rīga Stradiņš University Great Hall stage, with live video broadcasting. Despite the fact that the Congress was virtual, the two days attracted a significant number of participants — 753 registered colleagues. The invited guests included foreign lecturers from the United States, Israel, Germany, Croatia, UK, Italy, and other countries and the discussion panel was led by field leaders from around the world. We continued our tradition of preparing published reports of the Congress in a special issue of Proceedings of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, Section B, in collaboration with the Latvian Academy of Sciences.

The X Anniversary Latvian Gastroenterology Congress with International Participation was held for the first time for a two-day period (3–4 December 2021). This Congress differed from the previous ones in several aspects:

- Firstly, due to the severe COVID-19 epidemiology situation in Latvia, for the first time in its history since 2003, it was decided to hold the Congress not in person, but remotely from the Rīga Stradiņš University Great Hall stage, with live video broadcasting, using a specially designed virtual platform;
- Secondly, it was decided to hold the Congress for two days; the first day was devoted to different international and local satellite symposia, with a total number of ten, which corresponded to the number of Congresses. The second day of the Congress was devoted to the plenary session.



Live video broadcasting from the Rīga Stradiņš University Great Hall stage.

As previously, this Congress was organised by two Latvian non-profit organisations: Digestive Disease Society (*Grešošanas slimību biedrība*) in collaboration with the Gastroenterology Support Society (*Gastroenteroloģijas atbalsta biedrība*). The major aim of the event was to highlight contemporary gastroenterology issues for physicians. The congress was organised in conjunction with the leading Latvian medical associations.

Despite the fact that the Congress went virtual, these two days attracted a significant number of participants – 753 registered colleagues. We had invited foreign lecturers from the United States, Israel, Germany, Croatia, UK, Italy, and other countries and the discussion panel was led by leaders from around the world. The Congress was opened by the rector of Rīga Stradiņš University, Professor Aigars Pētersons, who emphasised the important role of the Congress, especially for Latvia.

Ten different satellite symposia took place on the first day of the Congress. The day started with the local symposium devoted to issues in laboratory diagnostics, where speakers shared their opinion about viral gastroenterocolites, *Cl. difficile* infection, and the importance of biochemical tests in modern gastroenterology. In the next symposium, lecturers discussed the efficacy of the use of vitamin D in patients with COVID-19 infection. The sessions continued with a symposium about microbiome analysis and the Latvian Microbiome project. The next symposium was conducted in partnership with the Latvian Internist Society and was focused on nutrition problems from different points of view, for example, by leading researchers gastroenterologist Dr. Jeļena Derova (Latvia) and endocrinologist Professor Ilze Konrāde (Latvia). Another symposium was planned together with the Latvian Infectologists and Hepatologists Association and was aimed to show current trends in hepatology, parasitology and the impact of COVID-19 infection on liver diseases. There was also a session devoted to the role of the family doctor in inflammatory bowel disease patients, which was presented by professor Aldis Puķītis (Latvia). The next symposium was prepared in collaboration with the Latvian Surgeon Association and was aimed to share modern insights in hepatobiliary surgery, cholecystectomy, and appendectomy. There was also an international symposium focused on old and new problems of the esophagus. Esophagitis and achalasia topics were covered during this meeting. Also, new clinical guidelines about a rational use of the proton pump inhibitors developed by our local leaders and supported by our Digestive Disease Society were introduced. The next session was devoted to a specific, but very important topic of current gastroenterology and surgery, i.e. bariatric surgery. Finally, the last fully international symposium was led by two leading European experts in the field of inflammatory bowel disease — Professor Silvio Danese (Italy) and Professor Subrata Ghosh (UK) and was called “The ever-evolving management of IBD”.

The next day of the Congress started with the plenary sessions. The first section was moderated by leaders of the field in Latvia — Professor Juris Pokrotnieks, Professor



Congress was opened by the rector of Rīga Stradiņš University Professor Aigars Pētersons.



Section moderators (from the left): Juris Pokrotnieks, Ludmila Viksna, and Artūrs Ozoliņš.

Ludmila Viksna, and Associate Professor Artūrs Ozoliņš. Professor Juris Pokrotnieks (Latvia) presented an overview of gastroenterology practice in the last 20 years. The presentation of Professor Ludmila Viksna (Latvia) was on liver damage in acute respiratory virus infections. Taking into account that there is large interest in the medical community in autoimmunity, Associate Professor Aleksejs Derovs (Latvia) presented a lecture on autoimmune gastrointestinal disorders. Then, professor Sandra Lejniece (Latvia) gave a presentation on state-of-the-art in haematology. Finally, ending this session, the current President of the Latvian Surgeons Association associate professor Artūrs Ozoliņš (Latvia) gave a state-of-the-art lecture on surgery.

The next section of the plenary session, which was chaired by Professor Aldis Puķītis, Professor Peter C. Konturek (Germany), and Dr. Jeļena Derova (Latvia), was opened by a presentation of Assistant Professor Aiga Staka (Latvia) on liver transplantology, particularly focusing on current issues in the field, especially in Latvia. Then, Professor Aldis Puķītis (Latvia) focused his presentation on ECCO news and the role of mesalazine in the treatment of ulcerative colitis. Professor Peter C. Konturek (Germany), being one of the leaders in the field of faecal microbiota transplantation, talked about faecal microbiota transplantation as a powerful tool for modulating gut microbiota. Dr. Jeļena Derova (Latvia) continued the section with a report on current issues of pain in the colon, being of a huge importance for gastroenterologists, family doctors, internists and surgeons. Finishing this session, Dr. Ilze Briuka draw the attention of congress delegates to issues of paediatric endoscopy.

The next section, which was moderated by Professor Rami Eliakim (Israel), Professor Juris Pokrotnieks (Latvia), and Professor Īzaks Rašals (Isaak Rashal, Latvia), started with a presentation by Professor Rami Eliakim (Israel) on current trends in endoscopy in inflammatory bowel disease. It was continued by colleagues Dr. Konstantīns Markēvičs and Dr. Olesja Basina (Latvia) with a report on esophageal stenting. Professor Laimas Jonaitis (Lithuania) then emphasised the role of budesonide in treatment of inflammatory bowel disease. Dr. Eduards Krustiņš (Latvia) devoted his presentation to artificial intelligence in gastroenterology, and finally Assistant Professor Sniedze Laivacuma gave a talk about microbiota and hepatitis.

The last section was moderated by an international panel of experts — Professor Jack A. DiPalma (USA), Associate Professor Aleksejs Derovs (Latvia), Professor Alastair Forbes (UK), and Professor Davor Stimač (Croatia). The first presentation of this section was by Professor Davor Stimač (Croatia) and was devoted to current trends in gastrointestinal endoscopy. The section continued with a talk by Dr. Zane Straume on highlights of the UEG week 2021. It was followed by *Dr. med.* Ilze Ķikuste, who spoke about stomach cancer, taking into consideration that digestive oncology is still one of the biggest healthcare problems in the European Union. Professor Alastair Forbes (UK) gave a presentation on mesenteric ischaemia. Professor Anatolijs Danilāns closed the congress with a state-of-the-art lecture in gastroenterology.

It is worthwhile to mention that the virtual industry exhibition had participation of many different local and interna-



Virtual discussion among Prof. Jack A. Di Palma (USA) (bottom left), Prof. Alastair Forbes (UK) (bottom right), and Assoc. Prof. A. Derovs (Latvia).

tional companies, and actively worked all these days, helping and informing delegates about the newest technological and pharmacological advances in the field of internal medicine and gastroenterology. The Virtual Congress platform with all the materials was available for delegates until early 2022.

We continued our tradition in collaboration with the Latvian Academy of Sciences and particularly Professor Īzaks Rašals, which started during the previous congress, by producing a special edition of the *Proceedings of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, Section B*, including scientific papers (original publications, reviews, case reports etc.) which were based on the best abstracts submitted for the Congress.

X JUBILEJAS LATVIJAS GASTROENTEROLOĢIJAS KONGRESS AR STARPTAUTISKU DALĪBU

2021. gada 3.–4. decembrī veiksmīgi norisinājās X Jubilejas Latvijas Gastroenteroloģijas kongress ar starptautisku dalību. Ņemot vērā sarežģīto epidemioloģisko situāciju valstī un visā pasaulē, Kongress šoreiz norisinājās tiešsaistē no RSU Aulas ar Rīgas Stradiņa universitātes, Veselības ministrijas un Latvijas Zinātņu Akadēmijas atbalstu. Pirmā diena tika veltīta satelītsimpozijiem, kuru laikā sadarbībā ar vairākām profesionālajām asociācijām — Latvijas Ķirurgu asociāciju, Latvijas Infektologu un Hepatologu asociāciju, Latvijas Internistu biedrību — tika apskatītas dažādas medicīnas problēmas gastroenteroloģijā, hepatoloģijā, abdominālajā ķirurģijā, laboratorajā diagnostikā, endokrinoloģijā u.c. Otrajā dienā norisinājās plenārsēde, kuru svinīgi atklāja Rīgas Stradiņa universitātes rektors profesors Aigars Pētersons. Kongresā kopējais dalībnieku skaits šoreiz sasniedza 753 dalībniekus. Ar savām zināšanām Kongresa laikā dalījās gan mūsu pašu medicīnas viedokļu veidotāji, gan arī vairāki starptautiska līmeņa eksperti no ārvalstīm, t.sk. ES un ASV. Kongresa Zinātnisko komiteju pārstāvēja vairāki nozares viedokļu veidotāji no 15 valstīm. Paralēli Kongresa programmai dalībnieki varēja apmeklēt virtuālo izstādi, kur par saviem nozares sasniegumiem vēstīja vairāki industrijas pārstāvji. Pasākuma platforma ar visiem materiāliem bija pieejama līdz pat 2022. gada 10. janvārim. Šajā Latvijas Zinātņu Akadēmijas Vēstu B daļas speciālā laidienā (*Proc. Latvian Acad. Sci., Section B, 2022, Vol. 76, No. 5/6*) tiek publicēti zinātniski raksti, kas balstīti uz labākajām kongresam iesniegtajām tēzēm.