

2nd Baltic Summer School on Epilepsy (BSSSE)

Tune, Denmark, August 31-September 4, 2008

Report

The 2nd BSSSE was held off Copenhagen but well reachable by public transport, in a former agricultural boarding school that has been turned into a meeting centre and was ideal for our purposes and budget: lots of meeting rooms in all sizes, all necessary media equipment, internet access, distance from the big city, no luxury but adequate rooms and a good kitchen serving traditional Danish countryside dishes, and a friendly and competent staff. We found it by chance but believe now that it is the best value for money you can get for a low-budget course in Denmark.

Participants arrived during Sunday where there was an informal get-together, and the course proper went from Monday morning to Thursday noon. People had the option to stay another night and be shown around Copenhagen on Thursday afternoon on a personal guided tour by two faculty, Hans Høgenhaven and PW who live there, and enjoy a traditional Danish *smørrebrød* dinner at PW's place. The majority of participants opted for this, and we will therefore in the future extend the course to 4 full days instead of 3 ½.

The maximum possible participation was 40, and of about 45 applications / EOI's, 39 people had been accepted. Of these, one Georgian had to cancel 1 ½ weeks before because she could not get her visa in time due to the Russian-Georgian crisis (she had to get it in Kiev since DK has no embassy in Georgia). There were no other serious visa problems but the embassies in some countries requested invitation letters. There were three late cancellations due to health issues, so at the end there were 35 participants from 14 countries (6 Baltic Sea countries, 7 other European, and 1 from Malaysia).

The registration fee was 800 € for the entire course, and a few travel bursaries were given on application (max. 200 € for Baltic Sea countries and max. 400 € for other countries). 3 participants paid for themselves, the others received bursaries from the ILAE Commission on European Affairs (CEA, 15), UCB Nordic (10), the Danish (2), German (2) and Norwegian (3) Epilepsy Societies, and the P & J Wolf Foundation for Epilepsy (3). The budget was taken care of by course director PW in close cooperation with Petra Novotny of the EUREPA office.

The Danish Epilepsy Society (DES) hosted the meeting by participating in the organising and programme committees, providing some of the faculty, and giving, in addition to the two bursaries, a financial support which mostly covered the last-day extension with the Copenhagen tour. Special thanks are due to Jesper Gyllenborg, Treasurer of the DES, who was very helpful in all organisational matters.

Many thanks are also due to the Danish Epilepsy Centre in Dianalund, some 40 km from the course site, who invited the participants to an evening visit with dinner.

Another sponsorship was received from Cyberonics Denmark which covered much of the faculty travel costs.

The course programme was developed by a programme committee including Peter Uldall and Jakob Christensen as representatives of the DES, and Ruta Mameniškienė as the permanent programme secretary. It was again targeted expressedly at young post-graduates considering or starting a career in epilepsy, and the vast majority belonged to this group, the average age being 35.

About 1/3 of the participants had also attended the 1st BSSSE. There, the participants had expressed the wish that the 2nd course would have a programme sufficiently at variance from the 1st to make it interesting for them again. This seems to have worked out as desired. The lists of topics and faculty are attached.

The programme structure was similar to BSSSE 1, with only 3 lectures per day, otherwise tutorials and discussions of participant's cases in small groups, case-oriented learning (COL) in small groups, and plenary platform presentations of participants' own research. The evaluation (see attached) showed that, again, COL was the format which was best appreciated by the participants. This seems to be the optimal teaching format at least for this age group. It should also be noted that more participants this time opted for a research presentation than a case presentation, and two of these platform presentations appeared in the end evaluation on the list of particularly good presentations.

The next BSSSE will be held in Kiel (Germany) on July 12 – 17, 2009, with the German Epilepsy Society as hosts and Ulrich Stephani of Kiel as co-director. BSSSE 4 is planned for June 6 – 11, 2010 in Norway, with Erik Taubøll of Oslo as co-director.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peter Wolf". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name below.

Peter Wolf, Course Director
Copenhagen, Oct 17, 2008