Annual report 2009 from the "Working Group for Echocardiography and Cardiac Imaging"

Board members: Manfred Ritter (President), Jean Bérubé (Vice-President), Cédric Vuille (Past President), Michael Zellweger (Secretary), Xavier Jeanrenaud (Treasurer), Christian Seiler (Councillor)



In the January 2009 number of Kardiovaskuläre Medizin the Swiss Society of Cardiology published "Recommendations for quality maintenance in echocardiography", thus establishing the framework for echo standards valid for Switzerland. In March 2009 the Swiss Society of Intensive Care Medicine adopted TEE into their training programme and the creation of an "echo module" for intensive care physicians was proposed. After intensive debate on this hot topic, Prof. Seiler as current President of the Swiss Society of Cardiology intervened at the SIWF (Schweizerisches Institut für ärztliche Weiter- und Fortbildung) with a request that it refrains from establishing a license of proficiency in echocardiography. However, his plea went unheard and during its plenary session on 26 November 2009 the SIWF decided once more to integrate echocardiography as an educational goal into the medical training programme of intensive care physicians. This decision will entitle intensive care physicians to perform "goal-oriented" echo studies and hence could be prone to decay of the diagnostic power inherent in state-of-the-art echocardiography. The next opportunity to react to this decision will not arise before 2011, when new accreditation for medical training programmes is scheduled.

Another hallmark of the year was the revision of our working group statutes. The board of the Swiss Society of Cardiology adopted this revision last fall, and we have drawn up revised statutes in three languages, German, French and Italian, which will henceforth replace those of 1991. Major changes comprise the inclusion of the new name of our working group and, as a consequence of this, the inclusion of imaging modalities other than echo. The trilingual version of our working group's revised statutes can be downloaded from our website www.swissecho.ch.

The Lucerne echo meeting of Profs Zuber and Erne, the Mayo Clinic meeting of Prof. Attenhofer in Zurich, the Journée Romande d'échocardiographie held this year in Geneva and Prof. Buser's EuroHeart Imaging in Basel again provided the traditional annual frame for continuous medical education in cardiac imaging inside Switzerland. During the June 2009 annual meeting of the Swiss Society of Cardiology in Lausanne we provided an update on the relevance of new techniques in echocardiography. Topics dealt with included contrast echo, speckle (motion) tracking and real-time 3D echo.

An introductory course on cardiac imaging for beginners was staged under the auspices of the Swiss Academy of Cardiac Imaging by Prof. Buser and Dr. Zellweger in Basel in October 2009; this event and the TEE course for cardiac anaesthesiologists held in Sigriswil in early December 2009 was accompanied and supported by several individual members of our working group. Finally, communication with the members of our working group was maintained continuously throughout the year via our "Newsletter" established in 2008.

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