

Final Report of The Second European Conference on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders



The Second European Conference on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders was held from 22 to 24 October 2012 in Barcelona. The conference was preceded by the first family day for Spanish parents of children with FASD. The main conference was attended by more than 200 professionals and parents from 25 countries around the world. The conference was hosted by the Parc de Recerca Biomèdica, a beautiful location overlooking the sea.



Parents meeting

For the first time, Spanish parents of children with FASD met together (on October 21). Most of these are adoptive parents, many with children from Russia and Ukraine. For many of these parents, it was the first time they received a good overview of what FASD is and got some information on how to raise their children with FASD. In the first part of the day, several professionals presented an overview of FASD and how it is diagnosed. Later in the day, some professionals involved in adoption talked about their pre-adoption information programs. All agreed that prospective adoptive parents need better information on FASD before adoption. Several of the parents decided to create an organization for the purposes of supporting each other and sharing information. About 50 parents attended this conference, and there was a recreational program for the children.

Overview of sessions

The main conference consisted of an intensive program of 2 1/2 days. During this time, short presentations gave insight into what is happening in various countries both from within and outside



Europe: Norway, Italy, Russia, South Africa, the Netherlands, Germany, Israel, Finland, Canada, the United Kingdom, Poland, and Sweden.

On Monday evening, a special training course was held for local physicians to learn about diagnosis of FASD. The main conference sessions covered topics ranging from politics of prevention, difficult aspects of diagnosis, targeted prevention, and psychosocial development of persons with FASD. On the closing morning, Ken Jones and Kenneth Warren gave a

fantastic overview of the history of recognition of FASD, while Margaret Murray and Ed Riley informed us about the progress of international screening and research collaborative efforts. Finally, Susanne Simon told us of actions undertaken by European midwives, and Lauri Beekmann placed FASD in a wider context of European alcohol policy.

Abstracts are available at <http://www.cjcp.ca/pubmed.php?articleId=390>.

Social program

“Unfortunately” the weather was sunny and balmy, making it quite difficult to return to conference sessions after coffee breaks on the terrace in the sun!

During the conference there was an opportunity to visit the research facilities at the PRBB.

On Tuesday evening, a gala dinner was held in the Miramar Restaurant Garden and Club, on the Montjuic, a hill with dramatic view over the bay. The evening lights in the harbor provided beautiful scenery as an endless series of delicious tapas was served. The poster prize was awarded to Pip Williams, Maria Catterick, and Eileen Calder, for the poster “As I see it . . . Using social media to bring out the voices of people with FASD, their families and carers.” The evening closed with a group playing lively Catalan music, and dancing.

Business meeting and elections

In a brief business meeting, minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved. Elections were held, unanimously re-electing the sitting board members and chair, with the addition of a new board member, Philippa Williams, who will bring her expertise as a birth mother. The Board thus consists of Diane Black (Chair), Katarina Wittgard (Treasurer), Giorgie Petkovič (Secretary), Thierry Maillard, Susan Fleisher, Oscar Garcia-Algar, Simona Pichini, and Philippa Williams. The decision was made to request membership in Eurocare, a Europe-wide umbrella organization for NGOs concerned with prevention of alcohol-related harm.



Petition to European Commission

During the conference, attendees had the opportunity to sign a petition which is being prepared to send to the European Commission. This petition asks for a new alcohol strategy to replace the current “Strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol-related harm,” which expires at the end of 2012. In this petition, we ask for clear measures to protect the unborn child, as outlined in the Vision document of the EUFASD Alliance.

Plans for next conference

The Third European Conference on FASD will be held in Rome in November of 2014 (exact date not yet fixed), as announced by Professor Mauro Ceccanti.

