



NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2020 - ISSUE 92

.....FROM THE EFI PRESIDENT

DEAR COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS,



What a turbulent year we have had so far. We have a pandemic going on, basically since March this year, which has changed our lives dramatically in all different aspects starting from our private environments with restrictions in various aspects - like visiting even closest relatives, attending cultural events, going to holidays etc. - and stretching deep within our professional lives, with eventually all conferences been cancelled, people working from home, and video and teleconferences having become a part of our regular working life. I hope that you, your colleagues, and your relatives managed to get through these difficult times without harm and that you'll stay safe until this nightmare is over.

The pandemic obviously affected EFI vastly. As you all know, we had to postpone this year's annual conference - which was supposed to be carried out in Glasgow - until next year. As a result of this a cascade of events resulted: All subsequent EFI conferences were pushed back for one year. Thus, Glasgow will now be in 2021, the combined EFI/IHIWS conference in

Amsterdam with the International Histocompatibility Workshop meeting will be carried out in 2022, the 2023 EFI conference will be hosted in Nantes and the 2024 event in Madrid. Again, as a result of these changes we also had to postpone the start of our cooperation with the corporate PCO company (Guarant) which will now organise our annual conferences from 2023 on, starting with Nantes. The contract with Guarant had to be adjusted accordingly. Furthermore, we had to postpone the International Summer School in H&I, which was supposed to be carried out in Prague in September this year. A new date has not been decided yet, however, we hope, it will be possible to resume plans for this event in 2021 and have it organised in September 2021. The financial implications for all these postponements are thankfully manageable and we have an overview of the damage that was caused.

Likewise, all regional, national and international educational activities in the field of transplantation, and H&I have been either cancelled or postponed or were switched to virtual technology. The annual ASHI meeting will for the first time be carried out as an e-conference in a couple of weeks' time from now. Participation will be for free and this will be an excellent opportunity for a so much needed continuing education in the field of H&I and Transplantation Immunology. I hope that many of you will make sure not to miss this great CPE activity.

EFI-Accreditation activities have also been hampered during the pandemic. I am sure that the Accreditation Committee representatives will more profoundly address this issue within the Newsletters. Basically, due to the travelling restrictions it was felt that the

best option we had was to include an extra Package B cycle for one year and postpone all inspection activities from March 2020 on. We will have to re-evaluate the situation soon and see how we will have to move forwards in 2021.

The COVID19 pandemic was associated with some additional challenges. EFI has decided to purchase licences for a video conferencing system as well as an e-conference platform. GoToMeeting and GoToWebinar were felt to be the most favourable platforms both financially and technically. Several e-meetings were carried out within EFI since these products were purchased: The EFI Executive Committee and several other Committees have had their regular meetings with the GoToMeeting software and we all felt that this was a significant improvement when compared to the "old-fashioned" conferences by phone. Also most probably, the annual EFI business meeting which is usually carried out in the autumn in Leiden will be a full e-meeting this year. More importantly, as a society, we are obliged to carry out an annual General Assembly according to our statutes. Last July we carried out the first-ever remote EFI-General Assembly via the GoToWebinar platform. The legal frame for a remote GA was given by some rapid adaptations made in the French legislation about societies, companies etc. in order to address the consequences of the pandemic (EFI is a society registered in France). Participation in the remote GA was very good and there was plenty of interaction possible. Many thanks to Sandra, our Management Assistant, as well as to Eric Spierings, the chair of the EFI IT & Bioinformatics Committee who worked very hard to make this event work successfully!

In addition to all the business meetings that were carried out virtually, EFI launched last May for the first time a webinar on COVID-19 and HLA research. In this webinar Luca Vago, one of the members of the EFI Scientific Committee, gave an excellent overview of the scientific work that is ongoing in this hot topic. The event was free of charge and very well attended, with participation from all over the world. It appears that events like this are feasible and definitively a good alternative to the classical conference formats which cannot be carried out as long as we are confronted with the pandemic.

With the results of our recent elections being approved at the virtual GA I would like of course to take the opportunity once again and thank Neema Mayor, Jean Villard and Pierre-Antoine

Gourraud as well as Katja Gagne who as Councillors and Deputy Treasurer, respectively, did such an excellent job during their term. Guys and girls, you will surely be missed! At the same time I would like to welcome the new members in the EFI EC, Kay Poulton, Marie Schaffer, Esteban Arrieta-Bolanos as new Councillors, Paul-Olivier Rouzair as Deputy Treasurer and of course, our President-elect, Ann-Margaret Little! Congratulations for being elected in the EFI Executive Committee! I look very much forward to work together with you all in these exciting and challenging times!

I would like to close by thanking again the numerous Committee members as well as Committee chairs who are about to step down in the following months. We value the work you have put into

EFI matters and we are so thankful as a society that we have motivated and talented colleagues like you who make it possible to sustain all the work carried out in EFI for all our members and for the good of our patients and clients, even in these difficult times.

I hope so much that soon the testing of vaccines will be successfully completed which will allow us to gradually return to our normal lives! As long as such vaccines are not available, we can only speculate on where and how we will all be able to meet in person again!

Stay healthy and take care of yourselves and your beloved ones!

Joannis Mytilineos

EFI President