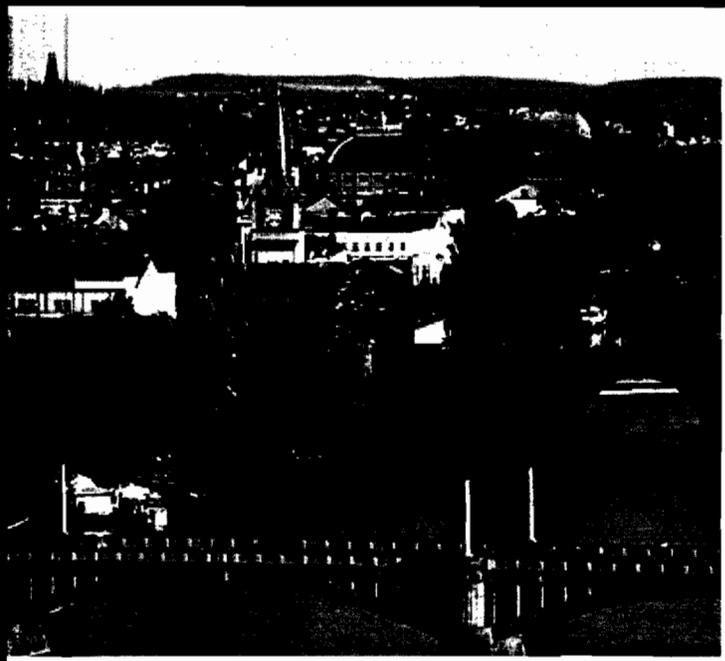


**Proceedings of the  
25<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the  
International Union of Angiology  
IUA**

**Prague, Czech Republic  
(July 1-5, 2012)**



**EDIZIONI MINERVA MEDICA**

# A stable strategy for European education in angiology/vascular medicine

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The construction of a European reality is a complex perspective which articulates in an intense work of "harmonisation" identifying common paths involving creativity, expertise and development of regulations and directives.

The aims of VAS (VAS-Vascular Independent and Education-European Organization-<http://www.vas-int.org>) are, in this perspective, help to create high-quality homogeneity at European level in every field from training to research or medical care and prevention, in harmony with the EU.

To make this possible, VAS considers European Education, for all the actors (from health professions to patients and population) and specifically for future Specialists, the basis.

It is well known that there are deep-rooted and major differences in the training curriculum and the organization of post-graduate specialist training in different European countries both outside and inside the European Union. Similarly, there are differences in the certification by health care structures with training facilities and in the organisation of Angiology/Vascular Medicine by the National Health Boards/Ministries.

The above mentioned aims, therefore, require intense work to exceed these differences in a perspective of European quality, while taking into account (to help improve or disseminate positive local aspects) the existing diversities and finally, considering any national accreditation, inserting them once again into a supra-national vision.

The majority of European countries have not activated a Specialty in Angiology/Vascular Medicine and in the few in which one is provided there are still differences: accessed directly after graduation, from other Specialities (also different). Some countries have National Diplomas while other countries have other forms of local training.

There is, however, a great need for qualified education everywhere and unique recognition which is independent from and complementary to the certification which can be obtained in the country of origin, both to form sound Specialists which, albeit through different routes, reach "homogenous" levels of certified preparation at European level as well as Accredited European Teaching Centers to guarantee quality specialist care for all European citizens (in the broad sense).

## Materials and methods

To meet these objectives it was necessary to: 1) create proper adherence and organization; 2) define the principles; 3) identify the tools and obtain adherence from the Institutions which are in charge of post-graduate training and draft official agreements; 4) obtain the recognition of Angiology/Vascular Medicine from UEMS; 5) define certification and accreditation criteria for European Teaching Centers; 6) set in motion the processes to obtain the CESMA-UEMS European Diploma in Angiology/Vascular Medicine

## Results

### *Create proper adherence and organization*

The collaboration that led to the creation of VAS, the collaborative network (by Statute a European non-profit Scientific Association) operating in the field of Angiology/Vascular Medicine (A/VM) was set up more than 20 years ago. In 1991, at the end of the International Symposium "The Future of Medical Angiology" held in Milan the European Working Group on Medical Angiology (EWGMA)<sup>1, 2</sup> was created, becoming the first European network aimed at strengthening this specialist area through training activities. The EWGMA was recognized by the IUA with the creation of a Committee on Medical Angiology. In 1996 a CLIPS Committee was created to sustain the first independent collaborative European research project CLIPS Trial.<sup>3</sup> The development of training activities, research and European coordination rendered a further step necessary, so in 1998, VAS-Vascular-Independent Research and Education-European Organization was created. The previous organisations (EWGMA and CLIPS Committee) were dissolved and converged into this European non-profit Scientific Organization which expanded its aims to include training, European research, awareness and initiatives aimed at European recognition of this specialist area.

### *Define the principles*

Some principles represent the basis of VAS and the skeleton of its various projects:

- synergy between education, research and medical care;

- independence from economic interest and construction of projects through collaboration between centers;
- each task and each cooperation, even personal, under the no-profit umbrella;
- institutional cooperation with Universities, Institutions and EU Bodies;
- high quality accredited educational projects;
- education relevant also for patients or awareness;
- projects that are not "striking", but stable and easily implemented.

*Identifying the tools and obtain adherence from the Institutions* which are in charge of post-graduate training and sign official implementable agreements. Precise programs have been defined following these principles, some have been active for years, while others are still in the making.

All training activities are supported by a stable European Teaching Panel.

Official agreements have been active for years for European Master and Postgraduate courses with Universities, National Scientific Societies following national regulations and locally with Hospitals.

Are already ongoing: European Master in A/VM, European Postgraduate Course for MD, European Fellowship on A/VM and pre-graduate exchanges (from Socrates to Erasmus) as well as the European Angiology Days annual academic meetings (CME credits).

While underway: European Postgraduate Course for Vascular Nurses and CME in E-Learning

#### *Obtaining the recognition of Angiology/Vascular Medicine from UEMS*

In 2000 VAS applies to the UEMS Council to create a Division of A/VM. after the recognition of VAS as the appropriate European representative. In 2007-08, VAS first obtained approval from the UEMS Council and the activation of the UEMS Division of Angiology/Vascular Medicine.

The UEMS Division of A/VM, has produced statements regarding the specialty (definition of Angiology/Vascular Medicine, Chapter 6, Policy Statement) giving Angiology/Vascular Medicine European dignity.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Defining certification and accreditation criteria for European Teaching Centers*

It is crucial to have besides European Educational programmes, a European Teaching Panel also Teaching Centers at European level which can offer common high training standards. Selection criteria for the

Teaching Centers had already been published by the EWGMA<sup>4</sup> and today they are being revised. The Centers are Certified by VAS and after this process, Accredited by the UEMS Division of Angiology/Vascular Medicine

Obtaining the CESMA-UEMS European Diploma in Angiology/Vascular Medicine

The European Diploma in A/VM has been established. The first European Exam for the CESMA-UEMS Diploma in Angiology/Vascular Medicine will take place in Milan the day before the 9th European Angiology Days 30th-2nd December 2012. The European Master in A/VM or European Fellowship in A/VM represent 2 of the 3 ways to access (for criteria see <http://www.vas-int.org> front page)

#### **Conclusions**

Work carried out by VAS on educational programmes has created strong collaboration for a unique European path in A/VM, differently articulated but with common aims and tool.

Today we have both a stable Organization (VAS) for the development of collaboration and projects and certification along as well as a stable Organization (UEMS Division of Angiology/Vascular Medicine) to recognize, accredit and widen the influence of Angiology/Vascular Medicine at UEMS level.

Today we have European Training programs carried out with the collaboration by numerous European Universities (or equivalent National accreditation Institutes at Post-Grad level) and VAS, a European Teaching Panel and we are going to up-date and accredit European Teaching Centers, while individual Specialists can apply for the CESMA-UEMS European Diploma in Angiology/Vascular Medicine.

These efforts promote the quality and the perspective of the individual countries making them part of a European process and gratifying the valuable activities which exist in each of them providing strength and tools which did not exist in the past.

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