



EURADIA, the European Research Area in Diabetes

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Main aims of EURADIA

In order to ensure a competitive edge in European diabetes research for the ultimate benefit of the patient and the community, major stakeholders grouped together in 2001 under the impulse of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD) to form an innovative and ambitious consortium: EURADIA (European Research Area in Diabetes). EURADIA is run by its Scientific Officer, Dr Carole Brendel, and is located in the EASD office in Duesseldorf, Germany. It is funded solely by the financial participation of its partners: there is no external funding. All major decisions and priorities are discussed during twice-yearly meetings attended by all partners.

The Sixth Framework Programme (2002–2006) of the European Union (EU) has been developed to support the establishment of a European Research Area (ERA) in order to make Europe the most dynamic and competitive knowledge economy in the world by 2010. The creation of EURADIA was inspired by this idea, applied to

Abstract

EURADIA, the European Research Area in Diabetes, is a consortium of non-profit organisations and leading pharmaceutical companies for the promotion and encouragement of diabetes research in Europe. Copyright © 2004 FEND.

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Key words

diabetes research; online database; funding agencies; Europe

the field of diabetes research. The initial aim of EURADIA was to ensure that diabetes research was a priority in the Sixth Framework Programme.

Since research is not exclusively undertaken by scientists working in laboratories, the contribution and points of view of all the members of the 'diabetes network' – encompassing patients, nurses and physicians – have to be taken into account. Therefore, EURADIA consists of a broad panel of non-profit organisations and leading pharmaceutical companies: the EASD, representing researchers; the Federation of European Nurses in Diabetes (FEND), representing nurses; the International Diabetes Federation – European Region (IDF-Europe), representing patients and practitioners; the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International (JDRF), representing patients with type 1 diabetes and researchers; and Aventis, Eli Lilly and Company, GlaxoSmithKline, Novo Nordisk A/S and Servier, which are leading companies in diabetes research.

The main goals of EURADIA are to aid the co-ordination of European diabetes research, and to be active in public advocacy and political lobbying at the highest

European level.

EURADIA, through its website (www.euradia.org), provides a platform for improved communication and sharing of resources within the diabetes research community in Europe. The website displays links to each partner's services relevant to the European diabetes research community, and disseminates information from the Directorate General for Research of the European Commission. It also provides services beyond the scope of individual partners.

The first project of EURADIA has been the creation of a free, online database cataloguing research groups and health care professionals carrying out research in Europe. Furthermore, EURADIA has participated in and organised stakeholder meetings focusing attention on the need for increased investment in European diabetes research and education. The consortium has already ensured that diabetes research features as a thematic priority area in the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Commission, and works actively to make sure that diabetes remains among the next priorities of the EU at research and educational levels.

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European diabetes research database

EURADIA has created an online database, the European Diabetes Research Database, cataloguing the research groups working on diabetes or related subjects all over Europe (including Iceland, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Israel). Listed are scientists conducting clinical or basic research, as well as health care professionals (practitioners, nurses) and researchers working for the industry. This database is intended to help researchers find new partners for collaboration, fundraising and technology transfer, and to aid students in their search for vacancies in their area of research interest.

This catalogue can be searched by administrative keywords (name of head of department, address) as well as by scientific keywords describing the field of research (subjects, specific techniques, ongoing clinical trials).

This is the first time that such a register has been created, and many professionals and students have shown their enthusiasm and interest in the project; a statistical tool will soon be included in the homepage to monitor the number of people visiting the website. The next steps will be the inclusion of more groups and individuals, especially nurses with the help of FEND and its membership file, and researchers working for the industry with the help of JDRE, as well as the broad advertisement of the database through the newsletters of each partner and at international congresses.

Ultimately, EURADIA aims to obtain an accurate map of diabetes research in Europe: 'Who does what and where?'

Database of funding agencies

Funds are a prerequisite for competitive diabetes research in

Europe. Raising these funds is a laborious and time-consuming activity for research groups.

An online catalogue of the different national and international funding agencies has been created to help researchers working specifically on diabetes to apply for the most relevant grants and fellowships. The available database contains only basic information. For details and the latest updates, users are invited to consult the organisation homepages directly. The list was created, for the most part, by scanning the acknowledgements of articles published in major peer-reviewed journals over the last two years (*Diabetologia*, official journal of EASD, published by Springer Verlag; *Diabetes* and *Diabetes Care*, published by the American Diabetes Association).

EURADIA itself does not award grants and does not provide any direct assistance to individuals wishing to apply for funding.

Lobbying activities and co-operation with the European Commission

The very high quality of diabetes research in Europe has to be sustained. Besides this, the continent should aim to become even more competitive by attracting young researchers from countries outside Europe and by launching diabetes-oriented educational programmes for health care professionals (such as the European Nurses Diabetes Collaborative University Project [ENDCUP]). EURADIA supports and networks the initiatives and events organised by its partners with a direct or indirect link to research at the EU level.

EURADIA, in collaboration with other leading associations, especially IDF-Europe and FEND, has already taken an active stance in political lobbying at the EU level by participating and organising major

meetings with members of the European Commission, the European Parliament, stakeholders, scientific personalities and the press.

At the same time, EURADIA interacts closely with the unit dedicated to major diseases, run by Alain Vanvessel, from the Directorate General for Research of the European Commission. EURADIA forwards, to the Scientific Officer in charge of diabetes issues, relevant information on the structure and activities of the main diabetes associations, as well as major findings in diabetes epidemiology, research and care in Europe published in peer-reviewed journals. This information allows the Commission to receive precise feedback from the population and from professionals dealing with diabetes, and also ensures that the Commission is aware of all the recent results in the research field. These data will be accessible to the public in the future on EURADIA's homepage.

EURADIA has also been allowed to reproduce on its homepage selected news from the EU about:

- New grant programmes and awards (framework programmes)
- Dates of conferences and workshops for the structuring of the ERA
- Updated policies in favour of industry and small and medium enterprises
- Summaries of innovations and exploitable research results in the diabetes field.

A major diabetes stakeholders' meeting is to be held in Brussels on 12 November 2004 in conjunction with the World Diabetes Day (14 November) under the auspices of the EU Commission Directorate General for Research and EASD. EURADIA will play an important



role in co-ordinating this meeting, and many of its members will actively participate, including FEND (Mrs Anne-Marie Felton, FEND Chairman, will give a speech entitled 'FEND: Impacting on the diabetes epidemic'). Scientists, clinicians, policy makers, patient associations, health care professionals and researchers, as well as the industry, will be represented. The conference will set the scene for an initial reflection on the creation of a European Framework for Diabetes Research to co-ordinate national health policies and raise more funds for diabetes research.

Towards a better public awareness about research

The total number of people with diabetes worldwide is projected to rise from 171 million in 2000 to 366 million in 2030.¹ In the EU alone, 18.6 million people had the disease in 2000 and it is expected that this figure will rise to 25.9 mil-

lion in 2030. More than ever, the public needs to be informed about the inexorable rise of the diabetes epidemic. Therefore, a real cross-talk between health care professionals and the public must be launched.

With this in view, EURADIA will aim to inform the lay public about the major topics and recent findings in diabetes research, in an accurate and clear way, mainly through press releases and through its website. This initiative should pave the way for a better understanding of the challenges and outcomes of research, by both the people and the politicians who represent them.

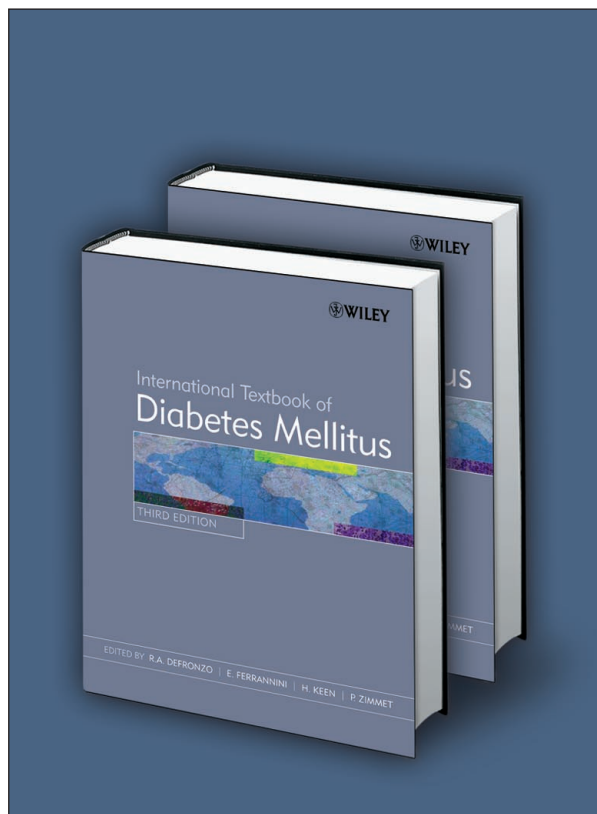
Finally, we hope that EURADIA activities will efficiently trigger and support major research and educational programmes for a better understanding of the causes of the disease, the elaboration of new treatments and the general improvement of care.

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Author's details

Dr Carole Brendel obtained a PhD in Molecular Biology from the University of Strasbourg, France, in November 2001. She is also a graduate of Biochemistry from one of the leading French engineering universities, INSA of Lyon, France. Under the supervision of Dr Auwerx, she worked on nuclear receptors implicated in lipid metabolism at the Institut Pasteur of Lille, (France) and the Institut de Génétique et de Biologie Moléculaire et Cellulaire (IGBMC Illkirch, France). Dr Brendel started working as the Scientific Officer for EURADIA in January 2003.



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