



Congress Interviews

EMJ was delighted to interview both the President, Branka Marinović, and Treasurer, Menno de Rie, of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology (EADV) Congress 2024, as they discuss cutting-edge research in dermatology and the future of EADV.



Branka Marinović

President, European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology (EADV); Professor of Dermatology and Venereology, University of Zagreb School of Medicine, Croatia

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Q1 What led you to focus on dermatology and venereology after completing your medical degree?

It's quite difficult to say because, at the time when I started my residency, dermatology was not as attractive of a residency as it is today. I had different opportunities, and I tried a few other positions, and then in the end I was lucky enough to get into dermatology. Although, I have to say, it was not my first wish; I was more interested in internal medicine and other specialities. However, after a few years, I was very happy because I discovered that dermatology has a lot of opportunities, from surgery to oncology and immunology. It has many, many subspecialty fields, so there are lots of opportunities.

Q2 Could you tell us a bit more about autoimmune blistering diseases, what the main developments are, and your motivation to work in this area?

This is one field of dermatology that, in the last 20 years, developed very rapidly in the field of diagnostic methods, but also

in the field of novel therapies. For many years, autoimmune blistering diseases were treated exclusively with systemic corticosteroids, which our patients are usually scared of because they are aware of a lot of side effects. But before the introduction of steroids in therapy, about 95% of patients were dying within 5 years.

Today, we have some new biologic drugs that can be used in treatment, and there are a lot of other drugs in pipelines, especially for treating bullous pemphigoid. It's a really exciting field and an exciting time for this group of diseases. There are a lot of trials and research currently going on.

Q3 Are there any ongoing projects at the University of Zagreb, Croatia, that you are particularly excited about?

I've been the Head of the Department of Dermatology at Zagreb for more than 10 years, and I have a group of very enthusiastic younger colleagues who are working in different fields, from sexually transmitted diseases, dermato-oncology, to autoimmune blistering diseases.

For me, I'm always coming back to autoimmune blistering diseases, because in that field, I feel most at home and comfortable.

We are a referral centre for the whole of Croatia in the field of autoimmune blistering diseases, but we are also part of the European Reference Network (ERN) for rare diseases of the skin, currently headed by Christine Bodemer in Paris. We are the group that can help patients throughout Europe, so patients from other countries are also coming to us.

Q4 The EADV plays a crucial role in addressing both clinical and public health challenges in dermatology and venereology. What initiatives or strategies allow EADV to tackle emerging global issues, such as skin cancer prevention, inflammatory skin diseases, or the rise of sexually transmitted infections?

This year, EADV reached almost 11,500 members, so we are an organisation with power. A lot of our members are key opinion leaders in their countries. Beside

other actions, we started to be very active in advocacy a couple of years ago. This means going to the EU to present the main problems faced by patients, as well as health care professionals in our specialty; cancer prevention actions; and also speaking about inflammatory diseases and the burden of those diseases, including the availability of drugs in different countries.

As a model, we have the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD), and they have a very strong advocacy group. However, it's much easier to do advocacy in the USA because they are one country, whereas Europe is made up of many countries, each dependent on their government. This makes it a little bit more challenging.

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Q5 As one of the chairs of the 'Hot topics in dermatology' session at the EADV Congress 2024, what areas of dermatology do you believe warrant further research?

This is called the President Symposium, so it's usually organised by three presidents: the immediate past president, the current president, and the incoming president. Each of us chose one of the topics, so I chose to invite Jan Gutermuth, Head of the Dermatology Department, University Hospital Brussels, Belgium; and President-Elect, Royal Belgian Society for Dermatology & Venereology, Belgium, who has a big interest in atopic dermatitis and some inflammatory skin diseases. He has also a big interest in following the signs of torture and different aspects of this neglect. This included older people who are being neglected by family members or nursing home staff, and now also refugees.

Q6 What sessions have you particularly enjoyed this year at the EADV Congress?

I just arrived from the session where I was speaking about lupus erythematosus, which is also one of my fields of interest. It was a very successful session where we had four speakers who spoke about pathophysiological processes, classical and available therapeutics, but also about future therapies because this field of immunology is developing quickly.

What is new in the programme in 2024 is the EADV Games. It is a completely new format, with games and representatives of residents from 18 countries competing against each other for a prize. As a completely new session, I cannot tell you too much about it, but it is an exciting development.

Q7 As EADV's President, what are your main objectives looking into the future?

I became President 2 hours ago, so my term as president just started. I think that my main goal is to keep quality. We have really excellent congresses, spring symposia, and a lot of courses that we are offering to young physicians. We can see from new members that there's interest in the EADV from younger generations, which makes us very happy. I would like to increase the number of courses for residents because they really like it, and such events are excellent platforms for learning as well as for networking. I would also like to strengthen our scientific committee and help to bring some new formats, because if these EADV Games are successful, maybe there is a need for some other new formats. Maintaining the high quality we strive for is not an easy thing to do.

