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Editorial

The European Association of Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation—a new beginning

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The founding working groups of our journal are in the process of creating a new European Association of Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation within the European Society of Cardiology. The working groups on Epidemiology and Prevention, and Cardiac Rehabilitation and Exercise Physiology, have forged this new alliance with shared political, professional and scientific ambitions. The new Association was announced at the General Assembly of the Society's annual congress in Munich on 2 September 2004. In welcoming the creation of the Association, Professor Jean-Pierre Bassand emphasized the central importance of cardiovascular disease prevention to the whole Society.

The new Association will have several roles to play in fulfilling the mission of the European Society of Cardiology: political, professional and scientific. Politically the Association will play a key role in supporting the Society in promoting policies for cardiovascular disease prevention across Europe and nationally. The Cork Consensus Conference on CVD prevention held earlier this year [1], the result of a partnership between the ESC, the European Heart Network and the Irish Presidency of the European Union, led to a comprehensive statement on prevention from the EU Council of Health Ministers June meeting in Luxembourg [2]. The Council recognized that to effectively address and reduce the incidence and suffering from cardiovascular disease, a long-term approach is necessary through public health strategies incorporating actions or programmes aimed at the healthy population, and at individuals and groups at high risk or with cardiovascular disease. The new Association can now support the leadership of the Society in taking concerted action for this new European Union cardiovascular prevention agenda at a European and national level. The Joint European Societies' Prevention Committee, which is responsible for communication and implementation of the Societies' CVD prevention guidelines in clinical practice will be supported by the

Association in its efforts to raise the standards of care for patients at risk of, or with established, cardiovascular disease.

In its professional role the Association will promote the principles and best practice of cardiovascular disease prevention and rehabilitation. It will address the needs of patients with cardiac disease, their families and those at high risk of developing cardiac disease. It will contribute to the development of professional guidelines, continuing professional development and standards in clinical practice, and the organization of education and training programmes in cardiovascular disease prevention and rehabilitation. Cardiovascular prevention and rehabilitation services rely on a multidisciplinary team of health professionals with different areas of expertise; therefore, the new Association will become the "house" for everyone working in this clinical field including cardiologists, nurses, physiotherapists, dieticians, psychologists, exercise physiologists and sports specialists.

In its scientific role the Association will contribute to the scientific programme of the ESC annual scientific congress and, importantly, to its own new specialist congress which will embrace population, clinical and basic sciences. The two founding Working Groups have already planned a joint meeting in Leuven, Belgium, from 7–10 April 2005, based on the theme of the long-term approach to cardiovascular prevention and rehabilitation [3]. In 2006 the new Association will hold its first annual scientific congress in Athens and, for a body with a focus on prevention and rehabilitation, it will appropriately take place on the site of this year's Olympic Games. The Association's scientific role will also include research through its surveys and registries of clinical practice, which inform the extent to which prevention guidelines are being implemented, and the availability and quality of rehabilitative services. This journal will be the official scientific forum for the new Association, and will

continue to publish the best science from all disciplines: cardiovascular epidemiology, prevention, rehabilitation, exercise physiology, sports cardiology and public health.

Both Working Groups now cease to exist as autonomous bodies and the elected leadership of their former nuclei have joined to form the Board of the new Association during this transitional phase. In this way continuity in the leadership of the new Association is guaranteed and it can build on secure foundations already laid down by the hard work of both Working Groups over many years. Specialists from both Working Groups have been prominent in developing European guidelines for CVD prevention and cardiac rehabilitation in clinical practice [4–6], creating a risk assessment and management tool (HEARTSCORE) for European populations to identify and manage individuals at high risk of developing CVD, [7] developing European recommendations for screening and sports participation in athletes with cardiac problems, organizing education and training programmes in cardiac rehabilitation and prevention, auditing clinical practice through the Euro Heart Survey programme (EUROASPIRE) [8,9] and developing a core data set of Cardiac Rehabilitation Audit Standards for Europe. Cardiac Rehabilitation and Exercise Physiology are now accepted as part of the European Society of Cardiology Core Syllabus for the general cardiologist [10]. This major step ensures a continuum of care from hospital to the community.

Creating this new Association will give greater visibility within the European Society of Cardiology to prevention and rehabilitation, and will be a beacon to other European and national professional organizations and ultimately the public. The Association will be able to more effectively represent the political, professional and scientific interests of its members to the ESC Board, the Board committees with responsibilities for guidelines, surveys and education, and others. The Association will make a

stronger scientific contribution to both the ESC congress and through its own new annual congress, which will bring together an even wider spectrum of scientists and clinicians. This is a new beginning and the challenge for the new Association is to work towards reducing the burden of cardiovascular disease in Europe through new scientific knowledge, professional excellence and political action.

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