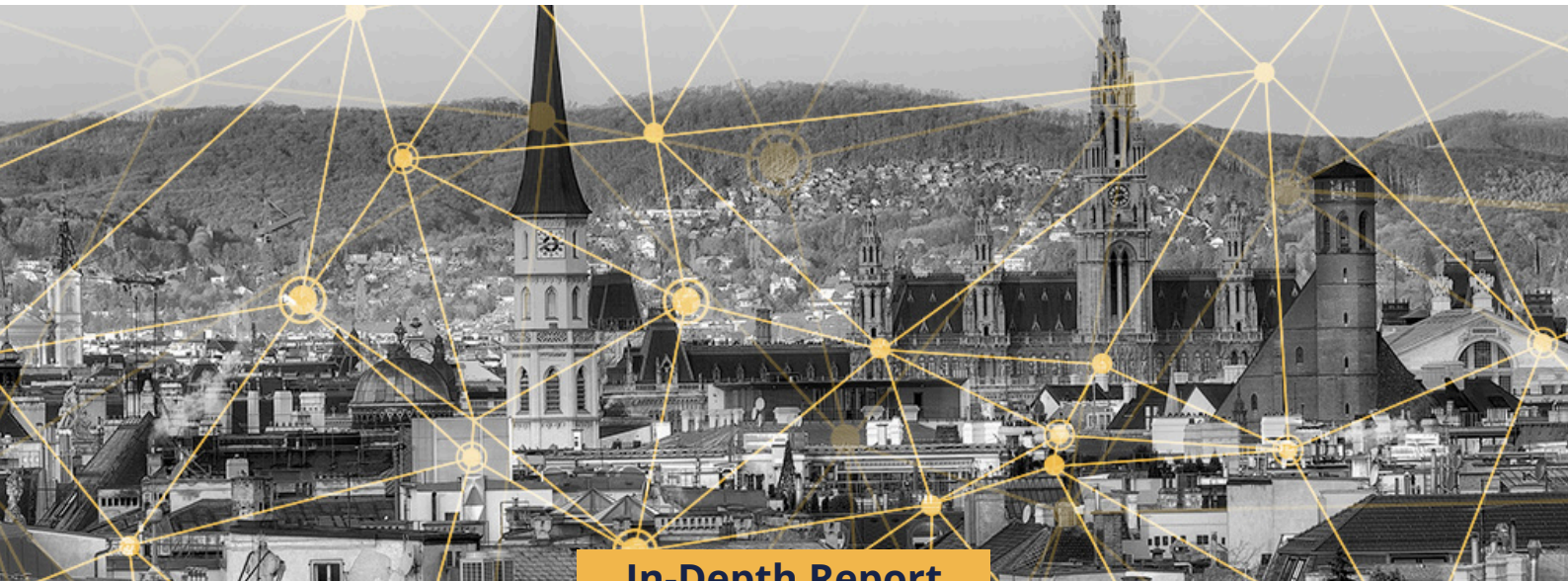


# The European Academy of Neurology

## EAN 2021 Virtual Meeting

June 19<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021



### In-Depth Report

The 7th Annual Meeting of the European Academy of Neurology (EAN) - the largest neurology congress in Europe - was held virtually between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021 and drew over 11,000 participants. The overarching theme of this year's congress was 'Towards Precision Neurology', reflecting a focus on current and future use of precise tools such as genetics, imaging and omics for the diagnosis and personalised treatment of neurological disorders.

#### Opening Plenary

EAN President Claudio Bassetti, Bern, Switzerland, began the opening plenary session by reviewing key activities and future initiatives across the EAN's four main pillars - science, education, membership and advocacy/communication. The vision of EAN is to be the home and voice of neurology in Europe, with a mission to reduce the overall burden of brain diseases. The 'Big 6' is a new EAN theme focused on key steps for the promotion/preservation of brain health and prevention of neurological diseases.



"The spread of COVID-19 has not only profoundly changed our lives and habits but has also pushed us to discover innovative ways of working and interacting, while also stimulating a great amount of scientific activity."

– **Raphaella Goldbach-Mansky, Bethesda, MD, USA**

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The opening lecture of EAN 2021 was delivered by Juergen Knoblich, Vienna, Austria, and explored insights from the laboratory that may profoundly influence how neurology research is conducted in the future. To combat the difficulties of murine modelling, cerebral organoids have been developed which can be used to model human brain development and recapitulate neurodevelopmental disorders in stem cell derived 3D cultures.

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“The human brain is the most complex and most fascinating organ that mother nature has created - but this complexity comes at a price as the brain is also home to some of the most devastating disorders.”

– Juergen Knoblich, Vienna, Austria

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This special session at EAN 2021 assessed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on chronic neurological disorders and patient care. Currently, there is no evidence to suggest patients with chronic neurological diseases have a higher chance of contracting SARS-CoV2, explained Johann Sellner, Mistelbach, Austria, however the risk of severe disease once infected is significantly increased. A 120,804-patient study from Brazil showed that neurological disorders conferred the highest risk of all comorbidities, with a death rate of 50% among hospitalised patients (although age remained the overriding risk factor). Important lessons



**50% mortality rate**

In patients with neurological comorbidities hospitalised with confirmed COVID-19

are continuing to be learnt about how to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on patients' overall disease course.

Disruption of neurological patient care was addressed by Marialuisa Zedde, Reggio Emilia, Italy, who emphasised the importance of addressing cerebrovascular diseases in a timely manner and safeguarding the protected 'stroke code guidelines' against the extensive changes in disease management pathways implemented in several countries. Social distancing or lockdowns should not be reasons to avoid or delay assessment of suspected stroke patients in emergency departments, Dr Zedde reiterated.

Elena Moro, Grenoble, France, explored neurological side effects of SARS-CoV-2 vaccination, noting that mild effects immediately after vaccination are relatively frequent, including fatigue, headache and myalgia, but resolve promptly within 1 –2 days. Severe neurological complications such as vaccine-induced immune thrombotic thrombocytopenia (VITT) with cerebral venous thrombosis (CVT) and Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) do occur, especially with adenoviral vector vaccines, but are rare. Full understanding of the pathophysiology of VITT is still lacking and international cooperation to drive robust data collection is essential to aid in prevention, early diagnosis and prompt management of these neurological adverse events.

Giovanni Di Liberto, Lausanne, Switzerland, outlined how the burden imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic affected neurology residents and research fellows across Europe. This impact has been felt in several key areas including clinical activities, education, research, career perspectives, burnout rates, emotional fatigue and difficulties in maintaining a health work-life balance.

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### Closing remarks

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In closing, Programme Committee Chair, Tony Marson, Liverpool, UK, explained that plans are already well developed for the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual EAN congress which will take place in Vienna, Austria under the overarching theme 'Getting Evidence into Practice'. We very much hope this will be an in-person event, stressed Dr Marson but contingency plans are in place for a hybrid congress or reversion to a virtual congress if required.

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"The aim for 2022 is to have a congress that represents the whole of Europe with a pan-European flavour. It will be a celebration that we can finally come together again after this really challenging time with the COVID-19 pandemic."

- Tony Marson, Liverpool, UK

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