



José Güell

ESCRS president José Güell will continue to build on the society's educational initiatives

José Güell MD, PhD, assumes the role of president of the European Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons (ESCRS), after the active and successful term of Paul Rosen. Dr Güell is the director of Cornea and Refractive Surgery Unit, Institute of Ocular Microsurgery, Barcelona, Spain. He served as secretary of the ESCRS from 2004 to 2008, and is a member of the Editorial Board of the Journal of Cataract and Refractive Surgery, and co-editor of the Consultation Section. EuroTimes Editor Sean Henahan spoke with Dr Güell about his goals as incoming president.

Q: What is your impression of the ESCRS today and what do you hope to accomplish during your presidency?

A: In recent years the ESCRS has definitely become a primary source of education in Europe and even in other parts of the world in the fields of cataract and corneal refractive surgery. We have seen great success with our annual meetings, summer and winter, as well as in print and online. Our meetings offer excellent educational opportunities through our courses, symposia, lectures and related activities. Our web presence in particular has improved in recent years and is an incredible education tool. Members can access meeting information, read *EuroTimes*, and access incredible resources through ESCRS On Demand. *EuroTimes* provides a way to easily keep in touch with our membership, both in print and on the Internet. Without doubt my goal will be to continue this emphasis, which has shown great progress under Paul Rosen, Ioannis Pallikaris and my other predecessors.

In the past 10 years the influence of the ESCRS has spread beyond Europe, and we are having a global influence. For example, we are attracting an increasing number of attendees from outside Europe. I think this is because we have been quite industry independent from the academic point of view. The academic level of our meetings is at the highest level in the areas of cataract and corneal refractive surgery. Another part of the story is that it may be more interesting for some people to come to some place like Paris than Dallas. Attendance has grown steadily over the past 15 years.

Q: What initiatives are under way at the ESCRS?

A: The organisation is exploring other ideas to expand our educational capabilities throughout Europe. For

example, we want to use our resources to show members where they can do short mini-fellowships, or for doctors, wherever they might be based, where to go to learn specific skills. We are also exploring new collaborations, such as our cooperation with ESASO, the School of Advanced Studies in Ophthalmology in Lugano, Switzerland. This will allow us to offer longer training courses, something not possible with our summer and winter meetings.

The European Registry of Quality Outcomes for Cataract and Refractive Surgery (EUREQUO) also has fantastic potential in this regard. EUREQUO is designed to facilitate the collection and analysis of cataract and refractive surgical outcomes with the aim to develop evidence-based European quality guidelines. The ESCRS is the lead partner along with the National Ophthalmology Societies across Europe, with funding assistance from the European Union. With active participation from doctors from around Europe this will offer us a way to work together almost as if we were in the same country.

Q: One interesting debate going on now is whether there should be a European qualification or certificate to perform LASIK and other forms of refractive surgery.

A: We have been working on this idea for several years. Today, it is still impossible. There are major differences between the various national health systems throughout Europe. However, it is possible that we might be able to create some sort of certification for surgical residents. Beyond that it would be very difficult to create a



ESCRS President José Güell at the opening ceremony of the 13th ESCRS Winter Meeting in Rome last year

“I am personally very interested in seeing the ESCRS take a leadership role among ophthalmology societies to focus in one way or another on poverty in the world, using all of our resources”

certification process that could be used throughout Europe. What we can do is suggest guidelines, but the ESCRS cannot give titles, this can only be done through universities, which are vastly different from one country to the next. Nonetheless, attendance and training at our ESCRS events can help surgeons in many areas of their practice.

Q: How well is the ESCRS doing at reaching out to young ophthalmologists?

A: I think our young ophthalmologist programme at the annual meeting is very good. We offer a full day of basic and advanced lectures. There is room for improvement; this is one of my goals. I would like to encourage the younger ophthalmologists to participate in the coordination and planning of this programme.

Q: How has the global economic crisis affected the ESCRS?

A: The crisis has had many effects in many areas of practice. We've seen this in industry involvement and investment in our meetings. I think the crisis may make

Mini biography:

Dr José L Güell was born on 1960. He is an associate professor of ophthalmology at the Autònoma University of Barcelona since 1991 and at Lugano University since 2009. He studied medicine and surgery at the Central University of Barcelona (1977-84). His Doctorate Degree about “LASIK, laser-assisted in situ Keratomileusis” was presented “Cum Laude”. He performed his residency in Barcelona at the Autònoma University (1986-1989) at the Vall d'Hebró Unit. He did a clinical fellowship in Cornea and Refractive Surgery with Dr George Waring at Emory University, Atlanta (1989). He has been involved in refractive and corneal surgery since 1989 and in laser corneal surgery since 1993. LASIK and Iris Claw phakic IOLs have been his procedures of choice for the correction of myopia and astigmatism since October 1993, and Intracorneal Ring Segments, anterior and posterior lamellar corneal transplant surgery and ocular surface management including amniotic membrane and keratoprosthesis, his main activities since 1996. He was awarded the 2008 Rayner Medal at the annual meeting of the UKISCRS: United Kingdom and Ireland Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons and with the Senior Achievement Awards IRS/AAO Presidential Awards, San Francisco 2009.

it difficult for some doctors to attend our meetings, although attendance has not dropped off. It may be that our Practice Development programme can help our members to not only develop their practices, but to cope with the current economic problems.

Q: What do you want to bring to the presidency on a personal level?

A: I am personally very interested in seeing the ESCRS take a leadership role among ophthalmology societies to focus in one way or another on poverty in the world, using all of our resources. I am not just talking about groups doing cataract surgery in needy areas. I am talking about hunger and poverty. I'd like to look at ways to include lifespan in the developing world, so first we need to feed people so they can live long enough to get cataracts! I would like to work with the WHO and other groups, not just raising money, but raising awareness and sensibility of these issues.

guell@imo.es