The European Diploma in Pediatric Neuroradiology sees the light of day

Andrea Rossi

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On 29 September 2013, the seven first-ever recipients of the European Diploma in Pediatric Neuroradiology (EDiPNR) were awarded during the diploma ceremony at the 37th European Society of Neuroradiology (ESNR) Annual Meeting in Frankfurt, Germany (Fig. 1). Two days before, Ingrid Inches (Italy), Eugene McKenna (UK), Bård Nedregaard (Norway), Pedro Soares Pinto (Portugal), Marta Safronova (Belgium), Chen Wang (Sweden), and Christian Weisstanner (Switzerland) had successfully sat for the final diploma examination, which concluded their long and perilous journey through a full 2-year cycle of the Pierre Lasjaunias European Course in Neuroradiology (ECNR) (comprising four different courses), the final examination for the European Diploma in Neuroradiology (EDiNR), and subsequently the European course of higher qualification in Pediatric Neuroradiology (ECPNR). To reach their eventual goal, these candidates were tested on nine different occasions: five multiple choice examinations at the end of each individual course and two final diploma examinations, each one consisting of a written test and an oral examination. In order to fulfill the entry requirements, they were also to exhibit proof of at least 6 months of training and/or 50 % daily work time in the field of pediatric neuroradiology. They had to work hard to get their diploma, no doubt, but their dedication has won them a prize that is not merely a paper to hang in plain sight on the wall of their office. Rather, it certifies their competence, their skills, and ultimately their dedication to work for the good of the smallest, weakest, and often most helpless of all patients: the children.

I first started working in a pediatric neuroradiology department in 1992, at the G. Gaslini Children's Hospital in Genoa, Italy under the mentorship and guidance of Paolo Tortori Donati, one of the giants of our discipline. When I started, I felt like an apprentice learning a mysterious craft. At that time, there was no formal training in pediatric

neuroradiology in the country, and I literally hung on my mentor's every word, trying to learn all his tricks and secrets. During all these years, not only have I always felt thrilled to be part of an elite of explorers of the unknown but also felt the urge to spread the word and to inspire others to choose this difficult but extremely rewarding career. However, the lack of formalized training and certification in pediatric neuroradiology has always been, and still is, a major setback. I have been asked several times by younger colleagues for advice on what they should do to become pediatric neuroradiologists, and I have always felt at a loss for a sensible answer. My own experience has been peculiar and is probably not reproducible in similar terms nowadays. This is why I have felt the urge to try and make a contribution by helping to shape the training, accreditation, and certification programs for specialists with particular competences in this fascinating field.

Pediatric neuroradiology has had a strange destiny. It is the subspecialty of two subspecialties (neuroradiology and pediatric radiology). Most radiological specialists regard it a very difficult, dangerous affair and tend to stay away from it. However, it is a fact that the vast majority of imaging studies in neurologically ill children is performed by adult radiologists or neuroradiologists working in general hospitals, and that only subsequently are patients referred to tertiary care centers. Thus, we have witnessed a growing demand for training opportunities and teaching offers in this specific field over the past few years. Political and corporate support has also been traditionally scant. Pediatric neuroradiology often seems to get the smallest slice of funding and resources, although the need of highly specialized expertise (as well as of dedicated, state-of-the-art, high-tech equipment) is immediately evident to referring clinicians and families alike. Today, pediatric neuroradiology has become the first among the subspecialties of neuroradiology for which a diploma of higher qualification is available in Europe. This is the result of the visionary input and leadership of many ESNR leaders and of the work and support from the Executive Committee of ESNR throughout many years. Yet, this is just one step along a comprehensive road that will eventually lead to the

A. Rossi (✉)
Pediatric Neuroradiology, Istituto Giannina Gaslini,
16147 Genoa, Italy
e-mail: andrea.rossi@ospedale-gaslini.ge.it

Fig. 1 The EDiPNR ceremony in Frankfurt, Germany (29 September 2013). *Left to right:* E. Turgut Tali (ESNR President), Andrea Rossi (Chair, ESNR Pediatric Neuroradiology Committee), Bård Nedregaard, Eugene McKenna, Nadine Girard (EDiPNR examiner), Pedro Soares Pinto, Chen Wang, Christian Weisstanner, Pia M. Sundgren (ESNR Chair). Photo courtesy of Charles Romanowski

certification of European neuroradiologists and the formal recognition of their individual competences and skills.

The ESNR has taken a leadership role in this process but has not worked alone. ESNR recognizes that European pediatric neuroimaging experts come from different backgrounds, following different roads and bringing the wealth of personal, individual histories that escape rigid categorization. Thus, the ESNR has actively sought the collaboration and input of other partners, particularly the European Society of Pediatric Radiology (ESPR) and the European Society of Magnetic Resonance in Neuropediatrics (ESMRN), with which pediatric neuroradiology shares a common area of interest. The first step of this fruitful collaboration has been the revitalization of the ECPNR, whose first edition dated back to 1995 but whose 4- to 5-year frequency had become inadequate to meet the growing need for highly specialized training and also suffered from heterogeneities in the scope of the teaching offered. In 2010, the three societies agreed to increase the frequency of the ECPNR courses to one every 2 years and designated three scientific coordinators (Andrea Rossi for ESNR, Maria Argyropoulou for ESPR, and Nadine Girard for ESMRN) to revise the scientific program and organize the renovated courses. In Marseille, France (2011) and Genoa, Italy (2013), almost 400 specialists from literally all over the world attended these 5-day courses which, despite the renewals and changes that were introduced by the new organizers, still managed to keep their characteristic interactions among teachers and students, with 50 % of the teaching offered in the form of workshops, and their traditionally informal, relaxed atmosphere. In this environment, teachers and students from all walks of life come together, exchange their

experiences and make lasting friendships. Still, this is not enough. Pediatric neuroradiology is far too complex and multifaceted for a single teaching course to cover all its important aspects in sufficient detail. Thus, the three societies agreed to expand the teaching offer in the near future by subdividing the ECPNR in a cycle of two 5-day courses, one per year, thereby allowing for a larger amount of topics to be included and for more time to be devoted to the in-depth analysis of the various aspects of our discipline.

Much remains to be done in order to harmonize the teaching and clinical practice of pediatric neuroradiology to a uniformly high level across the European continent. The discipline does not yet formally exist in the vast majority of university and specialization courses across Europe. The formalization of postdoc teaching modules, their harmonization with the proposed 3+2 model of radiological specialist training, the delineation of specific training charters, and the accreditation of training centers are yet to come, as is ultimately the formal recognition of this discipline from a legal point of view. To this end, ESNR will continue to devote time and resources, always in close collaboration with its scientific partners and with the European radiological family. We invite our younger colleagues to attend our courses, and it is our not-so-secret hope that at least some of them will fall in love with this incredibly rewarding discipline. We firmly believe our patients, our children, deserve this commitment and dedication.

Andrea Rossi, MD

Chair, ESNR Pediatric Neuroradiology Committee

Conflict of interest We declare that we have no conflict of interest