Belgian Society of Human Genetics Newsletter 25 June 2012

HIGHLIGHT: BCG-HO planning Meeting on Genome Wide Arrays

Dear co-members,

I would like to outline some of the activities of the BeSHG in this letter.

1. An all day meeting to be held on FRIDAY 5 OCTOBER 2012 at the PALAIS DES ACADEMIES in BRUSSELS has been organized by the BCG-HO group of the BeSHG in partnership with the Belgian Society for Cytological Analysis (ABCA/BVAC). The morning sessions will focus on genomic arrays, starting with a Broad Technical Overview, followed by Practical Applications in Hematology and finally Practical Applications in Oncology. A talk on Ethical Aspects of Genetic Testing will close the morning. The afternoon sessions will focus on new techniques of interest to members of both Societies. International and local specialists in these fields have been invited to address these subjects. So, block this date in your agenda and watch the BeSHG website for details regarding registration.

2. Report back: Information and Discussion morning on ‘Genetic Counsellors’. This Meeting took place on Monday 18 June 2012 at UZ Brussel, Jette. The potentially interested participants invited to partake, were clinical psychologists, educational psychologists, social workers, social nurses, and senior nurses with a Master degree, who were all counselling patients and families at or referred from the eight Human Genetics Centres. Catheline Vilain and Thomy de Ravel had prepared a programme for discussion. After each participant introduced himself or herself and their educational background, they each highlighted the area in which they currently work. The statutes including the core competency recommendations for genetic counsellors, as prepared by members of the European Network of Genetic Counsellors and Nurses (ENGCN) and approved by the European Society of Human Genetics (ESHG) was presented. Aspects of National Societies of Genetic Counsellors in neighbouring states and internationally, and their local legal statute as well as issues regarding recognition were then outlined. Discussion followed regarding the need for genetic counsellors, and their place in relation to the professions carrying out this work in Belgium eg clinical psychologists and social nurses. Individuals within this group carried out between 10% and 70% ‘pure genetic counselling’. The Group came to the conclusion that there was presently no need to form a group/ body but they...
had been happy to have met each other and hoped to get opportunities to get together in the future.

3. **Contact with Patient Support Groups:** In Belgium there are currently around 150 patient organizations, 90 of which have formed the umbrella body, RaDiOrg.be (Rare Diseases Organization of Belgium). Thomy met the President of RaDiOrg.be, Ms Ingrid Jagen, together with one other member of their Board, Ms Chris Aubry. Discussions to explore the potential interactions between RaDiOrg.be and the BeSHG in mutually advancing the aims of both groups ensued. In Belgium, RaDiOrg.be organizes the yearly international Rare Diseases Day on the last day of February whilst the BeSHG is planning to participate as from 2013 in the DNA Day – these could be forums where the two groups could support each other. The RaDiOrg.be would also be prepared to present the point of view of patients and their families at appropriate workshops.

4. **DNA Day:** The activities leading up to this internationally celebrated day, the 25 April, are coordinated in Europe by the ESHG. This involves high school children (15 to 17 year old) and their science/ biology teachers in writing an essay - the two topics are announced in November. The scholar writing the best essay on each topic, as selected by a committee of the ESHG, is rewarded, as is the teacher with a reward for purchase of equipment for the classroom. The Board of the BeSHG plans to translate the two proposed essay topics into both French and Dutch before circulating them via the two Education Ministries to the relevant teachers. The best essay coming from each of the two Belgian Education systems will also be rewarded locally by the BeSHG.

5. The BeSHG sponsored the prizes for the speakers at the 5th **Benelux Next Generation Sequencing Meeting** in Leuven, the first in Belgium. The Best Platform Presentation prize for a young investigator went to Joep de Ligt, RUNMC, Nijmegen, for his talk on 'Diagnostic Exome Sequencing in Patients with Intellectual Disability of Unknown Cause”.

6. Last but not least, **congratulations** to the 33 students, who succeeded in the **examinations** in **Human Genetics** organized by the BeSHG. This course will again be offered after a break of at least one year!

Hélène, Thomy and Willy Lissens also attended the 4th Human Variome Project Meeting earlier this month – feedback in the next Newsletter. Wishing you all a good summer with many sunny hours.

Sincerely

*Thomy de Ravel*

Chairman, BeSHG