

Editorial

The Second Euro-Asian Congress of Pharmacoepidemiology Recently Held in Tehran 2019

Since the first Euro-Asian Congress of Pharmacoepidemiology (EAPEC), organized in Shiraz in January 2018, was very successful in attracting scientists and professionals interested in medicine usage and safety from across Iran and abroad,^[1] the organizing committee considered it essential to follow it up with a second congress, continuing the important discussion on best practices in monitoring, analyzing, and assuring appropriate and safe use of medicines in the population of Iran. Accordingly, the second congress was held at the Faculty of Pharmacy, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences 13–15 November 2019. Again, the congress attracted a large number of participants, approximately 500, with different backgrounds in academic research and healthcare.

The 1st day was occupied by two workshops. One, led by Professor Gerd Kullak-Ublick and Dr. Payam Peymani, representing the University Hospital, Zurich, Switzerland, was devoted to “Methodological options for the evaluation of drug-induced liver injury”. The other workshop had the title “Big data and Fraud Detection” and was led by Dr. Saeed Majidi from Tufts University, USA.

The program of the main conference was very rich with subjects covering a wide spectrum from analytical issues in pharmacoepidemiology and the financial burden of drug-related harm to clinical pharmacy, and the preventability of adverse drug reactions in individual patients. The opening session had presentations by Prof. Reza Malekzadeh, Deputy Minister for Research and Technology, Iran, Prof. Mohammad-Esmaeil Akbari, Senior Advisor of Minister of Health and Medical Education, and Mr. Sten Olsson from Sweden representing the International Society of Pharmacovigilance (ISoP). He gave a brief explanation of the difference between pharmacovigilance and pharmacoepidemiology and why a close collaboration between the two disciplines is important for the continuous learning from past experiences in drug therapy and the correct analysis of risk factors.

Pharmacoepidemiology and pharmacovigilance require a multidisciplinary approach, including clinical, pharmaceutical, and nursing disciplines, to understand all factors influencing the use of medicines and risk factors in the pharmaceutical supply chain and management. Besides, contributions of social and communication sciences are required to understand what determines the behavior of patients and how information about the

appropriate and safe use of medicines spreads in society. Data scientists and statisticians are needed for the construction of well-designed databases and intelligent use of data collected.

The need for such a multidisciplinary approach was taken care of at the conference by a series of panel discussions, by which particularly complex topics were considered from several different angles. Examples of such issues were ethical and economic aspects of drug use and the application of pharmacoepidemiologic studies.

Particularly forward-looking sessions included the presentation of a national plan for the prevention of noncommunicable diseases and approaches for the identification and prevention of medication errors.

Proposals were made to improve conditions for pharmacoepidemiological research through linkage of different health-care databases in the country that, if analyzed together, could lead to a better understanding of current drug use and associated harm in the population of Iran. A network of such databases could potentially be set up to help to answer many different research questions related to optimal drug use and clinical outcomes. Such networks have been established in other parts of the world, but their establishment has been associated with many difficulties in terms of differences in technical standards and the use of noncompatible definitions, classifications, and nomenclature. Another frequent finding has been that the quality and consistency of the stored information in health-care databases are often compromised, leading to low reliability of analyses.

In connection with the closure of the conference, an announcement was made that a third Euro-Asian Pharmacoepidemiology Congress is planned to be held in Isfahan at the end of 2020. For the program of that meeting, it would be of interest to also learn about the activities of other stakeholders and programs in this domain, for example, the pharmaceutical industry and public health programs such as immunization and tuberculosis programs. Furthermore, perspectives from patient associations would add to the full understanding of the impact of the use of medicines in society. ISoP is suggesting EAPEC organizers initiate a collaboration with the Middle East Chapter of ISoP and also to consider contributing to and attending the 20th Annual Meeting of ISoP, taking place in Muscat, Oman, 12–15 October 2020.

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