



Editorial

Interstitial lung diseases: course report

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Faculty

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In 2014, the European Respiratory Society (ERS) realised the need to improve medical education in the field of rare lung disease, especially in interstitial lung diseases (ILDs). Since then, four ERS courses have been held in Heidelberg, Germany, and provided an overview of the field of ILDs. The latest ERS course on ILD was again held in Heidelberg in April 2019 and 80 participants from 27 different countries took part. New this year, the course was streamed live to over 100 participants from 31 countries. Over the years, the organisers' and the ERS's ambition has been to improve the interactivity and the interdisciplinary aspects of this course. To address this, the participants learnt which diagnostic procedures should be applied for approaching ILDs and what difficulties may arise in ILD diagnosis, which were discussed based on real-life cases. Special emphasis was given to practical courses including high-resolution computed tomography (CT) evaluation and sessions on ILD pathology, and a hands-on session on cryobiopsy. As therapy remains a challenging aspect in the management of ILDs, this course provided participants with insights into the newest developments, and the pros and

cons of specific ILD treatments; in addition, end-of-life strategies and acute complications were approached in workshops. Interdisciplinary ILD board discussions were held between specialists and course participants, and course attendees had the opportunity to present their own challenging cases and discuss them with leading experts. Furthermore, there was a dedicated session on the pathogenesis and future trends in ILDs as well as specific conditions and treatments for ILDs.

One of the main challenges during the course was the different levels of existing knowledge of the participants. While many had an advanced, sometimes excellent comprehension of ILDs, for others, this course was one of the first steps into the world of ILD. This also reflected the different challenges identified during the course; for many, the complex diagnostic approach to ILDs, its sophisticated treatment approach and its complications like acute exacerbations or comorbid conditions were challenges before the course. For more advanced colleagues, difficulties in end-of-life strategies, the more individualised management of chronic diseases and the complex approach to the diverse forms of connective tissue disease-associated ILDs were challenging.

Participants' involvement in the course was very intense and people were eager to learn about all aspects of ILD. This included lively discussions during participants' case presentations, and the hands-on session for cryobiopsy and radiology, but also more complex facets like palliative care, management



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Participants attending the recent @EuroRespSoc course on interstitial lung diseases share their experiences <http://bit.ly/31roKoG>

of comorbidities and finally, the differences in management between countries and continents.

While we have experienced significant progress in the field of ILD in past years, many open questions for future research in this field remain. One example is the optimised treatment for chronic fibrosing ILDs: while we can decelerate disease progression in some (*e.g.* idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis), there is still no cure, and for others, there is significant uncertainty of the choice of optimal treatment (*e.g.* chronic hypersensitivity pneumonitis). Other relevant research questions are the approach to ILD-associated complications such as acute exacerbations and the importance of “early” ILD, *i.e.* interstitial lung abnormalities. For educational activities, the combined efforts of ERS courses on the various aspects of ILDs, online modules, postgraduate courses during the ERS International Congress and interactive webinars were identified as essential for future education in this field.

The field of ILDs remains one of the most challenging and exciting in pulmonology, where significant new developments are to be awaited on an annual basis. In light of this, participants demanded updates on ILDs on a regular basis. Therefore, the faculty and the course organisers think that it is imperative to repeat this ERS course on ILDs on a regular basis with adaptations to the contents and course format as needed. Finally, these courses foster interdisciplinary and international collaborations, an important need in pulmonary medicine in general and for ILD in particular.

Deval R. Mehta, India, a participant

I recently attended the ILD course organised by the ERS at Thoraxklinik, Heidelberg. The lack of structured learning for this kind of subspecialty during the training years attracts pulmonologists to this type of course and I am grateful to the ERS for granting me a bursary to attend it, which has immensely benefited both me and my institution. The course was unique as it not only taught us about ILD but also gave us a practical experience of the multidisciplinary diagnosis approach.

The atmosphere was welcoming and pleasant. The presence of eminent faculty members from all over Europe and participants from all over the world made it exciting to learn in a global atmosphere. The venue, Thoraxklinik, situated in the beautiful city of Heidelberg, is a renowned centre in Europe for treatment of pulmonary diseases.

The course was highly informative and dealt with a wide variety of topics in ILD, expanding the horizons of my ILD knowledge. It was comprehensive in covering all the relevant topics in ILD, ranging from diagnosis to treatment, and even discussing palliative management and future treatment approaches to ILD. It also added a greatly



to my existing understanding and knowledge of ILD. I had learnt about the availability of some online resources for my ILD research, like the ILD questionnaire and websites to determine drug-induced lung disease like www.pneumotox.com.

I also learnt the subtle points of radiology in order to correctly interpret the thin-section CT scans required for a correct diagnosis of ILD comprising over 200 entities. As a pulmonologist, requesting the correct CT technique plays a paramount role in diagnosing ILD and it was taught to us in a wonderful manner. Apart from the radiological diagnosis, the importance of obtaining a bronchoalveolar lavage fluid and the dilemma of whether to perform a biopsy were discussed thoroughly. We also had a live demonstration of transbronchial cryobiopsies during the course, supplemented with a hands-on experience of learning it during the workshop.

The topics like the role of nurses in ILD were interesting for participants like me, as they demonstrated the active role they can play in management of ILD patients. Another topic that aroused discussion was end-of-life strategies and conversation in ILDs, as there was a considerable difference across countries due to the cultural differences.

The course had a good mix of lectures, live demonstration, interactive cases, multidisciplinary ILD boards, practical workshops and quizzes, which kept it interesting throughout the 3 days. The course was challenging for me to assimilate all the learning I had acquired in those 3 days but it certainly equipped me with the right tools to learn more and correctly approach my patients in a defined manner.

The faculty was very good, supportive, encouraging and welcoming to all our queries. The interaction with them during the breaks also motivated me to learn further in ILD. The participants were also given an opportunity to visit the tuberculosis museum located at the Thoraxklinik.

The take-home message I received from this course was that the pulmonologist has a huge role to play in managing ILD and, along with a multidisciplinary team, can correctly diagnose ILD and manage patients with available treatment options.

I would like to thank the ERS for developing this innovative course and supporting participants like me to attend this fantastic course in person. This opportunity will be used as a stepping stone to dive into the ILD diseases spectrum and decrease the burden associated with it, thus promoting lung health.

Anna Kovchun, Ukraine, a participant

For me personally, attending this course was an important step in my formation as a doctor and as a pulmonologist. The friendly atmosphere, as well as focus on the core aspects, not only strengthens participants' knowledge, but also to reduce "nescience". In addition, a comfortable atmosphere was created. On this course, the faculty explained concepts concisely, expanded out professional horizons and provided food for thought.

It is incredibly difficult to select the best topics from those already chosen by world experts, but certainly I would like to highlight the topic "connective tissue disease-associated lung disease". This problem covers a large group of diverse patients, the difficulty of timely diagnosis of which is associated with the diversity of the clinical picture of the debut of the disease. As a result, the faculty conveyed an understanding of the necessity for early diagnosis and adequate treatment of lesions. They did everything possible to direct the audience towards broad clinical thinking and, as a result, to conducting an early differential diagnosis.

I would like to pay special attention to lectures by Claus Peter Heussel. His professionalism, approach to the diagnosis of diseases of the respiratory

system and radiology in general made an indelible impression on me, which will forever remain in my memory and undoubtedly make adjustments to everyday practice. His lectures and workshops were bright, emotional, filled with debate and extremely productive. After these lectures, there was a feeling of "everything in its place".

The lecture "Bronchoscopic and surgical diagnostic procedures in ILDs with live transmission from the operating room for transbronchial cryobiopsies" was also extremely good. Venerino Poletti and Felix Herth were unsurpassed during their speeches. Unfortunately, transbronchial cryobiopsy is not a widely used method in Ukraine, so this lecture and live transmission from the operating room allowed me to see this exciting process from the inside.

Workshops with first-class specialists allowed all participants to test their strength and capabilities in the fields of imaging and cryobiopsy, and to share experience in the field of clinical and end-of-life strategies and conversations in ILDs.

The validity and effectiveness of a multidisciplinary approach to patients with suspected ILD was displayed in almost all lectures. I will implement it in my practice; I am sure that the regular use of this approach with colleagues will lead to the popularisation of this approach in Ukraine.

Overall, this course was a valuable and unique experience for me. I can say with confidence that this course is a must for any pulmonologist – both at an early stage of a career, and for those who are already accomplished and experienced. Everyone can benefit from the course, improve their knowledge or learn completely new aspects of treatment strategies.

I express my gratitude to the ERS, the faculty and all participants for this unique opportunity.

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Conflict of interest

M. Kreuter reports grants and personal fees from Boehringer Ingelheim and Roche, and personal fees from Galapagos, outside the submitted work. A. Wells reports consultancy and speaking fees from Roche and Boehringer Ingelheim, and consultancy fees from Bayer and Blade, outside the submitted work. D.R. Mehta has nothing to disclose. A. Kovchun has nothing to disclose.