



‘SCOPE’ breakthrough for obesity professionals

First European “Fellows” honoured in Prague

A groundbreaking programme to improve the recognition of obesity professionals reached a major landmark with the announcement of new Fellows at the opening of the European Congress on Obesity in Prague.

More than 40 leading figures in the medical field of obesity, given recognition under the scheme’s formal qualifying process, will be named by Prof Philip James, chairman of the International Obesity TaskForce (IOTF).

The fellows scheme is intended to help identify those with established medical expertise in the field of obesity management and is one of the key components of SCOPE –Specialist Certification of Obesity Professionals in Europe. A joint initiative with the European Association for the Study of Obesity (EASO) with the IOTF, it offers a rolling programme allowing those with appropriate medical backgrounds to apply to become Fellows throughout the year.

The scheme also offers training courses and online medical education programmes for doctors to qualify as members and is moving into a new phase to offer qualifications for other health professionals.

Prof James said that SCOPE represented a major breakthrough for the obesity field and was a model which groups elsewhere were already demanding should be introduced in other parts of the world. “As we cope with an ever increasing public awareness of obesity and increasing demands for solutions, we need to ensure that the medical world rises to this challenge. We need Fellows to provide leadership within the medical community and to contribute to improving the knowledge and understanding of both doctors and other health professionals of how to manage obesity,” he added.

Next steps

Both specialist and general practitioners can undertake courses which lead to accreditation as members. By the end of the year the scheme is expected to be extended to involve health professionals ranging from nurses, pharmacists, nutritionists, dietitians, exercise and fitness

professionals, physiotherapists and other groups who already practice or intend to undertake work in the community management of obesity. Non-medical professionals will be able to qualify for accreditation as counsellors.

Prof Vojtech Hainer, who chairs the EASO management task force and the European fellows selection committee, said: "This will become an important qualification for those non-medical professionals who want to be involved in helping to tackle obesity and will enable the public and patients to identify whether fitness instructors, dietary advisers and others offering counselling services on obesity are properly qualified to do so."

An on-line teaching course will be rolled out later this year with a credits system leading to certification for IOTF-SCOPE members. A further SCOPE accreditation system will set standards and provide recognition for other local, national and European courses.

A course aimed at diabetologists will take place at the end of ECO on May 29 in the Prague Congress Centre. Speakers include Nicolae Hancu (Weight Control and Cardiovascular Risk in Diabesity), Luc van Gaal (Assessment of the Obese Patient with Type II Diabetes), and John Wilding (Clinical Management of the Obese Diabetic Patient).

The teaching units will also be available as part of the on-line courses, along with modules from an earlier cardiovascular specialists course held during the 3rd International Symposium on Obesity and Hypertension (ISOH'03) in Berlin, run with the kind participation of Professor Alfred Wirth and Professor Krzysztof Narkiewicz.

Fiona Scarrott, education and conference manager, who has established the programme, said there was growing support for the scheme throughout Europe. Details of how to participate in the SCOPE scheme and online training programmes are available on the EASO website: <http://www.easoobesity.org>.

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