ENERCA: e-learning platform

Patricia Aguilar-Martínez

Department of Haematology, Montpellier Hospital Center of Expertise on Rare Iron Disorders, Montpellier, France

Abstract

Introduction

ENERCA (the European Network for Rare and Congenital Anemias) is a European Commission funded project since 2002. Rare anaemias in Europe comprise haemoglobin disorders, such as thalassemias or sickle cell disease, and other rarer disorders, including inherited diseases of the red cell membrane, of the red cell enzymes, as well as anaemias related to disorders of iron metabolism.

Education and training on rare anaemias is one of the main objectives of ENERCA and several educational initiatives have been undertaken during the past and present phases of the project. Among these, the organisation of courses for health professionals, the provision of videos with prevention messages for patients and general practitioners were part of the previous phase, ENERCA 3. In the current phase of the ENERCA project, called e-ENERCA, the workpackage dedicated to Education and Training mainly focuses on training of young physicians, biologists or scientists in the field of diagnosis and management of rare anaemias.

The specificity of e-ENERCA is to be based principally on new communication e-tool. Two main educational axes will be developed: the organisation of on-site courses including interactive sessions with voting boxes and the implementation of an online e-learning platform.

Methodology

The platform is currently under construction. It will contain a comprehensive set of e-learning activities elaborated by experts in each field of rare anaemias. The objective is to improve and harmonize diagnosis and management of patients with rare disorders by providing health professionals with updated data in the field. Knowing that e-learning in isolation is not very easy to follow, we have opted-in to developing blended learning (i.e. association of e-learning with traditional learning). A promising strategy consists in setting-up a European inter-university diploma that will allow health professionals to benefit from the support, experience and interaction of several experts in the field while using the e-learning platform. This will concern both, young professionals in training and continuing medical education activities for post-graduated.

In order to test the feasibility of this strategy, we have initiated a course for French speaking learners at Montpellier University. This course will start in 2014-2015 and participants from French-speaking countries, including France, Belgium, Luxembourg, as well as African countries, have already started to register. During the first year of the course, participants will have a full on-site learning program including two weeks of course (on February and May 2015). They will also have the opportunity to test the first version of the platform and will help improving it. Part of the learning activities of the diploma will be also found in the platform, including a pre-test to evaluate the learning needs and the gaps to be filled, some of the courses on haemoglobin disorders and part of the final test. The subsequent step will be to complete the online modules in order to obtain a comprehensive set of data on each field of rare anaemias and to switch to/add an English version.

In addition to the blended-learning programme, the platform will be also freely available, after registration, for professional who would not want/need to follow a full training. However, this activity will not allow earning a formal university diploma.

Conclusions: Expected results

The proposed programme aims to ensure long-term sustainability of the platform and of the course at the European level. The final objective is to provide a large access to updated knowledge on rare anaemias, a field of haematology and medicine that needs to be promoted among new generations of doctor, biologists and scientists.