

# Close to 8,000 nephrologists gather in IFEMA for the ERA- EDTA congress

A case study of innovation and openness in medical congresses



Sociedad:	ERA-EDTA (European Renal Association - European Dialysis and Transplant Association)
Tamaño	8.000 pax
Espacios	North Convention Centre + Halls 8 and 10 + Hall rooms

Great moment for the “kidney community” which comes to Madrid to celebrate the ERA-EDTA Congress (European Renal Association-European Dialysis and Transplant Association). A congress which has a clinical approach that is much appreciated by the participants, but also a careful eye towards basic science, and consequently gathers a very large attendance for whom the content is very relevant as well as practical. And this approach works: as ERA-EDTA Executive Manager Monica Fontana tells us, “this is not a just-European congress: 40% of delegates come from outside Europe”.

Change and innovation have been on the agenda of ERA-EDTA for years already, as Monica confirms: “We have seen a huge transformation since the 1990’s. Transmitting knowledge used to be ‘dumping knowledge’ by a speaker to a crowd who, hopefully, would duly listen and learn. This format is still often used but we are exploring new ways of transmitting content”. This innovation is essential: “Not only content is important, but also how it is delivered and used”, says Monica. Let’s see some of those changes...

## A tech-packed congress

If innovation includes technology, then the association fares well. It launched an app years ago and constantly improve it (it is produced in-house). It enables an interesting interactivity: “during the congress in Madrid, people will be able send questions through the app, in key sessions, and the moderator chooses the questions to be answered. This makes asking questions easier, and generates more questions and therefore better knowledge about and in the audience. After the session, questions will be available on our European Nephrology Portal (ENP) E-materials section where people can ask more questions, so the community lives on; furthermore, a community blog called ERA-EDTA Dialogue will start just before the congress and will be available all the year for scientific discussions”.

Last year ERA-EDTA also launched an e-learning platform that makes the congress content available for the whole year. Content is used to give value to members and attendees. “There are plans to change the membership structure in the near future, allowing all participants who attend the congress access to all the ematerial content”.

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## AFTER THE SESSION, QUESTIONS ARE TREATED ON THE ASSOCIATION’S PORTAL, SO THE COMMUNITY LIVES ON

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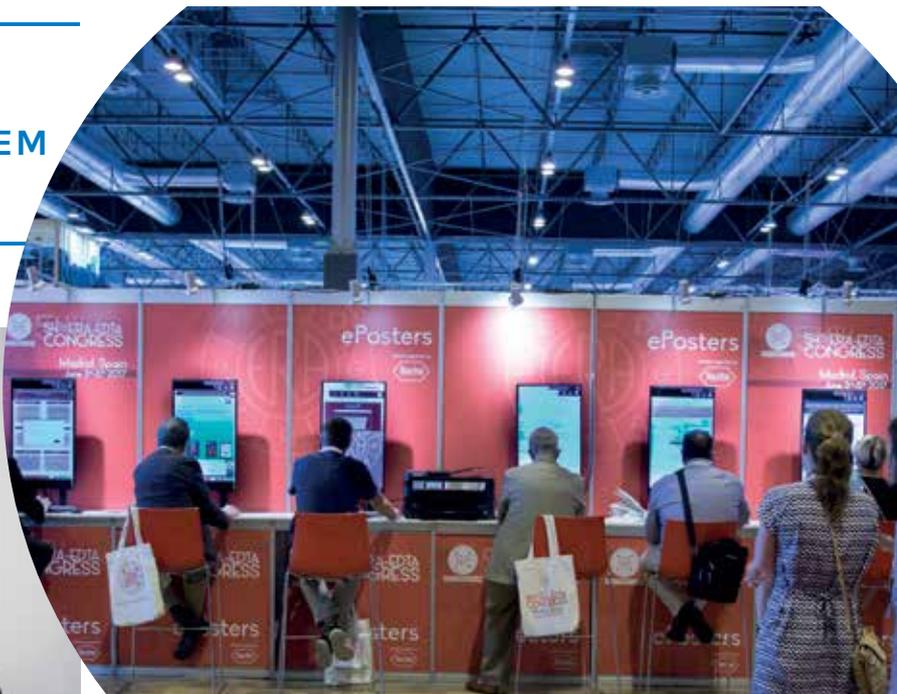
ERA-EDTA is also very active on social media: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Instagram, Vimeo and Youtube, including a Youtube Playlist which will include the videos related to the Madrid congress. And to ensure life in the sociosphere, during the congress young Spanish nephrologists will cover the scientific sessions on Twitter.

To get everyone aboard the social train, in Hall 10 a Digital Service Area (DSA) and an e-Campus will teach delegates everything related to interactive tools and support them with any technical problem. The society also broadcasts specific sessions by live streaming.



## EMPOWERING DELEGATES: A DIGITAL SERVICE AREA (DSA) AND AN E-CAMPUS TEACH THEM ABOUT INTERACTIVE TOOLS

Monica Fontana, ERA-EDTA Executive Manager



### Get the young on board

This is a (highly strategic) challenge for many congresses: getting the young to participate. The association has a platform for young nephrologists, which is active throughout the year, and it strives to make it easier for these professionals to get involved. This includes free membership programmes based on the best articles published in the society's journal and for the best abstracts submitted to the annual congress. They also connect them to experienced professionals, through an advisory programme which puts together a young person and an expert, who can meet or hold meetings by Skype.

So members under 40 have access to specific Continuing Medical Education (CME) courses outside the congress, special sessions in the congress, and even networking moments outside the congress. And all this builds a true community.

## IN THE PAST, MEMBERS WANTED A GOOD JOURNAL AND GOOD CONTENT; NOW THEY WANT COMMUNITY

### Diversification of target audiences

As a great gathering of professionals related to this discipline, attendees now go beyond doctors: compliance makes it difficult to significantly involve patients, but the association is open to anyone which works in a field of interest of the association. "Dieticians and nurses can be members, so for the first time in Madrid we are organizing an interactive session where also nurses can learn something regarding the problems they face in their daily practice", says Monica. The congress will include a day devoted to nurses and dieticians. Also one of the ERA-EDTA Working Groups, the one concerning nutrition (ERN), is organizing a CME course that could be of interest for dieticians. Finally, a collaboration with an association linked to physical activity are examples of going "beyond just the kidney".

"Scientific societies must be more personalized. In the past, members wanted a very good journal and good content. Now professionals want community. You have to make it personal in the era of Facebook. Networking is fundamental so they get involved, learn and identify areas of collaboration with other professionals. For this reason, again for the first time, during the Congress participants can take advantage of the "Meetings on the Go" where they can book a special meeting room to meet with colleagues.



## Making it more human

Though scientific content is important, the ERA-EDTA also includes other contents which make the Congress more human and include the personal and creative side of participants. For instance, a photo contest which took place for World Kidney Day, and an exhibition of pieces of art by members who are also artists. There will be an “art in nephrology” section in the Congress. The idea is to “show expressions related to the science” as Monica puts it and to show this is not only about kidneys.

## ...and improving human skills

The content is not only scientific, as we saw: a new event format will be introduced, an interactive workshop about improving communication of doctors and nurses with the patients. This is a knowledge that will be acted out live by two professional actors, to enhance learning experience and content retention.

## Beyond the congress

A congress is a specific highlight, but the association has lots of other initiatives, like CME sessions, and meetings throughout the year in smaller cities. Bringing education and knowledge is one of the most important objectives of the association, which means this is transmitted in the congress and well beyond. Monica sees clearly that it all sums up: “these other educational initiatives don’t cannibalise the annual congress at all”.

## Selecting the city and venue

ERA-EDTA has a clear procedure and parameters for this selection, including congress centre capacity, infrastructure and airport connections of the city, as well as not going back to the same country in less than five years.