

# European Heart Rhythm Association Young Electrophysiology Community: the future is just ahead

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Talks and ideas on forming a dedicated *Young Electrophysiology (EP) Community* within the European Heart Rhythm Association (EHRA) have been floating around for several years. The asymmetric age distribution inherent to a young field such as cardiac EP has eventually led to the urgent desire to identify the next generation of EP physicians and shed light on their needs and interests.

The European Heart Rhythm Association as an organization and personally Prof. Karl-Heinz Kuck (EHRA President, 2013–15) stepped forward in 2013, and committed to improving the diversity of communities within EHRA, initiating three new committees, one of which has been the Young EP Community.

The Young EP Committee has been formed to facilitate, enhance, and accelerate the development of early career electrophysiologists. Our goals are to provide an efficient networking venue, as well as educational programs and research opportunities for young EP professionals, thus creating a global network within the scientific EP community. At its core, the Young EP Community wants to help a new generation overcome challenges and open myriads of educational and research opportunities through collaboration across Europe.

And if it is Young EP, who else would be more dedicated to lead this group, than individuals from the young generation? *Young EP for the Young EP!*

## Group photo (Frankfurt, November 2015)



In this short communication, we would like to introduce the members of the Young EP Committee, and highlight the most relevant work and milestones from the last 2 years, since the foundation of the EHRA Young EP Community.

*Dr Tom De Potter*, Associate Director of the Cardiovascular Center at the Department of Cardiology, Arrhythmia Unit, in Aalst (e-mail: tom.de.potter@olvz-aalst.be), thinks the Young EP Community initiative is best summarized by paraphrasing Abraham Lincoln—‘by the young, for the young’. Tom was appointed as the Chair of the Young EP Community in 2013 when the community was founded. As he says, ‘at the time, there were no members, no infrastructure, but we had the immeasurable energy and enthusiasm to build a community for our purposes, strongly encouraged and supported by EHRA’.

As Tom describes, a unique feature of our community is the initiative of national ambassadors. With the help of the national ambassadors, we were able to reach out to the different countries and develop local contacts. ‘Currently we have over 500 registered members from 72 countries, 30 of which are officially represented in the Young EP Community by national ambassadors, many of whom have made significant efforts to build our community.’ I also would like to point out that ‘young’ in the context of this discussion means a stage in one’s career, rather than a particular age, or position. Although we needed to define an age limit, that definition proved to be quite diverse throughout Europe. Therefore, we settled on defining our target audience as under age of 40 years, or older, if <3 years out of EP training.

For a new community, ideas for improvement have no expiration date and we would like to take the opportunity to extend a very warm thank you to all the ‘non-target audience colleagues’ who have helped us over the past 2 years with ideas and support, and in particular the staff at the European Heart House for enduring and helping our initial steps at building this initiative.

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the University of Rochester, Rochester, NY, USA (e-mail: valentina.kutyifa@heart.rochester.edu), has been working for the Young EP Committee since its initiation in 2013 and since 2015 has served as the Co-Chair of the Young EP Committee.

I aspired to work in cardiac EP after finishing medical school. I fully understand and experienced some of the challenges younger colleagues may face. It is natural in this early career phase to reach out for guidance and support, and young professionals often ask their peers rather than their supervisors or mentors. Therefore, I felt it important to assist the society with providing such an opportunity for early career EP professionals, *the first world-wide initiative for young electrophysiologists*.

My personal mission within the EHRA Young EP Community is to promote clinical research among young EP professionals. It is well known that young professionals are more likely to innovate, and most breakthrough ideas are developed in the early phase of one's life. Since the initiation of the Young EP Community, we have established regular scientific sessions at the Cardiotim/Europace conferences to present challenging cases and showcase the best research papers among young EP professionals.

In addition, young EP professionals are now promoted for scientific activities such as giving presentations or chairing sessions at international conferences. Academic medicine with the involvement of young EP professionals is yet to be sustained, and thus, *our activities have significance for the future of cardiac EP*.

*Dr Elena Arbelo*, senior specialist in cardiology, electrophysiology working at the Arrhythmia Unit, Department of Cardiology, Thorax Institute in Barcelona (e-mail: elenaarbelo@secardiologia.es), has been an active member of the Young EP Committee since 2013.

I have been a proud and enthusiastic member of the EHRA Young EP committee since the very beginning. In fact, my interest in this initiative began with the first attempt to constitute such a group within the Spanish Society of Cardiology in 2012, after realizing that there was a growing need to create an entity that could serve as a link between the new generation of professionals dedicated to cardiac arrhythmias and the group of experienced professionals.

In the last decade, we have seen how the field of EP has experienced exponential growth in scientific production and the emergence of new technologies, allowing treatment of increasingly complex arrhythmias. Subsequently, there has been a significant increase in the number of professionals and decentralization of clinical training and scientific production. Accordingly, the new generation of electrophysiologists have less opportunity to professionally interact and collaborate closely. These profound changes occurring in the field of cardiac EP pose a significant challenge, and the EHRA Young EP Group wants to respond appropriately.

I would like to encourage young electrophysiologists to become part of the Young EP Community, since this group was created for them. Finally, I would like to underline that this group was created to serve the younger generation of electrophysiologists, and *ideas, suggestions, and contributions to enrich this important initiative are welcome!*

From 2013 to 2015, the Young EP Committee was supported by *Dr Andreas Metzner*, consultant cardiologist, electrophysiologist from the Asklepios-Klinik St Georg, Hamburg, Germany; and *Dr Michal Pazdernik*, from the Institute for Clinical and Experimental Medicine, Prague, Czech Republic. Andreas has been instrumental in our online educational material available for the Young EP

Community, and in preparation of the Exchange Programme for young EPs at fellow European centres and institutions. Michal has been working closely on the National Ambassador programme, making it a huge success, with identification and active participation of a couple of dozen ambassadors.

Since 2015, we have new committee members joining our efforts, including *Dr Jędrzej Kosiuk*, cardiologist working at the Department of Electrophysiology, Herzzentrum, Leipzig, Germany (e-mail: jedrzejkosiuk@hotmail.com).

As Jędrzej describes, EP itself is a relatively new discipline, which is still evolving and rapidly changing. In order to provide some guidance and possibilities for personal and professional development at early career stages, some structure or an organization is absolutely necessary. The Young EP Community is designed to answer this need and much more . . .

The Young EP Community gives its members the possibility to develop outside their facilities or even countries, to co-operate with more experienced colleagues and to learn from the best physicians in the field. Moreover, it is an excellent platform to become involved and actively contribute to the development of future structures of European EP and cardiovascular medicine. Apart from that, *being part of a community is a human thing*.

*Dr Sergey Barsamyan*, another new committee member since 2015, a cardiac electrophysiologist working at Cardiology Arrhythmology Department of Malatia Medical Center in Yerevan, Armenia (barsamyan@gmail.com), will put his strength into boosting our networking and communications.

And why does Sergey think we need a Young EP group? *Life is hard for every young doctor who steps on the path of cardiac EP and even harder for those who train in less developed countries*. Sometimes there is no source of career advice other than the opinions of senior colleagues that are frequently not applicable to today's rapidly changing realities. In addition, there is a limited educational content available for beginners and no central platform for sharing relevant news and educational materials. Lack of awareness of training and research opportunities that appear daily across the world, no instant peer support for coping with routine difficulties, and no online options for discussing cases or exchanging skills are among the many unaddressed problems.

'If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants' Isaac Newton said. 'The log brakes only when the village stands on it' (unity is strength), as the old Armenian saying goes. Personal success frequently depends on group effort and it is more sensible to first lean on the shoulders of one's peers, who are in the same boat. *Good news about the boat—an experienced captain named EHRA can guide everyone to a safe harbour*, once the passengers line up into a cohesive group. And instead of reinventing the wheel every time, young EPs will be able to find pathways for success in the community-made 'navigation map'.

In summary, the EHRA Young EP society formed in 2013 has been extremely successful in building a community of young EP professionals with over 500 members from over 70 countries, represented by the unique national ambassador programme in Europe. We have engaged leaders in EP and established regular sessions of case-based reports, and best published research at the international Cardiotim/Europace conference. Furthermore, we have increasingly been represented at these international congresses to present our

research work, as well as chairing sessions, thereby contributing to the scientific work of the society.

Our work has gone a long way, but there is always more to do. We will further extend our activities with increasing our presence at scientific conferences internationally and locally in each country, arranging our first Young Summit with a programme for National Ambassadors (April 2016), creating a platform for short-term clinical exchange programmes, and actively engaging with fellow Young EPs on the social media. We will also be publishing reports of our activities as well as interviews from members of the Young EP Community in the *Europace* journal. We are looking forward to new members who are interested in participating in our current projects or proposing new ideas.

## Join the Young EP Community today to make a difference!

<http://www.escardio.org/The-ESC/Communities/ESC-Young-Community/Young-electrophysiologists/Young-Electrophysiologists>

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**Conflict of interest:** none declared.

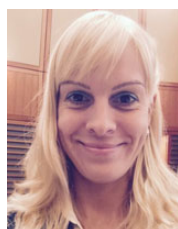
## Dr. Tom de Potter



**Tom De Potter**, graduated in 2001 from the University of Leuven in Belgium and trained as a cardiologist in Aalst and Ghent University until 2007. He then started a fellowship in clinical electrophysiology at Hospital Clinic in Barcelona under the mentorship of Prof. Josep Brugada, and in the department of Prof. Karl-Heinz Kuck in Hamburg. Since 2009, Dr. De

Potter joined the Cardiovascular Center Aalst where he currently serves as associate director, clinically active within the arrhythmia unit of the department. In addition, he currently also holds a consultant position at Leuven University Hospital. His main activities are split between clinical work and research projects, which have focused on applied research in the field of complex ablations and multimodality imaging, for which he has been awarded unrestricted research grants from several non-profit and commercial sources.

## Dr. Valentina Kutiyfa



**Valentina Kutiyfa**, is a research assistant professor at the Heart Research Follow-up Program in the Cardiology Division of the University of Rochester Medical Center, Rochester, NY, USA. She holds a PhD in cardiac electrophysiology, a Masters' degree in health care management, and a certificate in clinical research from Harvard Medical School, and

has a research interest in cardiac arrhythmias and sudden cardiac death. Her research work encompasses a wide array of studies related to implantable cardioverter–defibrillators, cardiac resynchronization therapy, echocardiography, and technology innovations including the wearable cardioverter–defibrillator, subcutaneous ICD, and left ventricular assist devices.

## Dr. Elena Arbelo



**Elena Arbelo**, MD, PhD, is currently a consultant in Cardiology at the Cardiothoracic Institute of the Hospital Clinic (Barcelona, Spain), where she works as a Cardiac Electrophysiologist. She is also the coordinator of the Cardiac Genetic Diseases Unit (for which HCB is a national reference centre) and an active member of the Biomedical Research Institute August Pi i Sunyer (IDIBAPS).

Dr. Arbelo has trained at different international facilities: Centers for Disease Control (CDC—Atlanta, USA), Mayo Clinic (Rochester, Minnesota, USA), Ospedale San Raffaele (Milán, Italy), Homburg University Hospital (Saarbrücken, Germany), Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (Boston, USA) and Academic Medical Centre (Amsterdam, The Netherlands). She has also obtained a Masters Degree in Cardiac Electrophysiology, by the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, and a Masters Degree in Research Methodology: Design and Statistics in Health Sciences, by the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona. For the past 4 years, she has been an active member of the Committee of the Young Electrophysiologist Group of the European Heart Rhythm Association (EHRA).

## Dr. Jędrzej Kosiuk



**Jędrzej Kosiuk**, born and raised in Poland, completed his medical education at the Medical University of Vienna, Austria. Since 2008, he has been practicing medicine at the Heart Center Leipzig, Germany, where he works as an electrophysiologist. His main research interests are focusing on ablation of complex ar-

rhythmias. His work in this field has been rewarded by the German Society of Cardiology together with German Heart Foundation and also financially supported by different grants. For the past years, he has been a coordinator of Leipzig's ICD patients support group and active member of the Committee of the Young Electrophysiologist Group of the European Heart Rhythm Association (EHRA).

## Dr. Sergey Barsamyan



**Sergey Barsamyan**, MD, ECDS, CCDS, is currently a clinical cardiac electrophysiology fellow at Oxford University Hospitals, Oxford, UK, per EHRA "Clinical Electrophysiology with Emphasis on Catheter Ablation" training grant. He got his basic EP and device training at Bakoulev Center of Cardiovascular

Surgery in Moscow, Russian Federation, after which he worked at MONIKI hospital in Moscow as a cardiac device specialist and at

Malatia Medical Center in Yerevan, Armenia as a clinical cardiac electrophysiologist. He holds double certification in cardiac rhythm device therapy. He was honoured with Edmond Keosayan Award for Excellence in Cardiology by Armenian Medical Association in

2007 and was awarded a cardiac surgery research grant by the Russian Ministry of Education and Science in 2008. For the past 2 years, he has been a national ambassador for Armenia at the EHRA Young EP Community.