



Minutes of the 12th European Orthodontic Teachers' Forum Montreux (Switzerland), 06.06.2017

Chairpersons: A.M. Kuijpers-Jagtman, S. Kiliaridis, G. Willems

Attendees: 80 attendees (50 signed attendance list)

Short courses leading to a “Master”. A new era in orthodontic education?

1. (AK) Opening, announcements

Professor Kuijpers-Jagtman (AK) opens the meeting and welcomes the delegates. She is proud to report that both the EOTF as well as NEBEOP are now officially covered by the EOS umbrella. Where NEBEOP stands for high quality of orthodontic education in Europe and is restricted to either provisional or full members, the EOTF is an open forum for everybody involved in orthodontic teaching. In the past some interesting discussions on several pedagogical themes, trying to improve the quality of postgraduate education in orthodontics, have been held in both plenary and break-out sessions:

- 2006 Strengths and weaknesses of orthodontic education in Europe
- 2007 Development of NEBEOP and collaboration between programmes
- 2008 Self-assessment for quality control
- 2009 The minimum requirements for the undergraduate orthodontic curriculum
- 2010 How do we learn? Adult learning
- 2011 New ways of learning
- 2012 E-learning
- 2013 Competency based postgraduate education
- 2014 Quality assurance in postgraduate education
- 2015 Final examination assessment procedures
- 2016 Adopting a coaching approach to teaching

This year the theme of the EOTF is ‘Short courses leading to a “Master”. A new era in orthodontic education?’

2. (AK) Plenary session

Professor Kuijpers-Jagtman also welcomes the representation of the EFOSA General Assembly who are equally interested in this new development in orthodontic education. She introduces the four speakers of this morning: Julian O’Neil, president of EFOSA; Christian Scherer, Treasurer of EFOSA; Silvia Allegrini and Andreu Puigdollers, members of EFOSA. All four speakers cover the rising master programmes in their countries, UK, Austria - Germany, Italy, and Spain, respectively. Basically these programmes often create the wrong impression as

if participants may acquire orthodontist specialist registration upon completion of the programme, while many of them are not affiliated with a dental school or dental hospital and do not provide any or very limited clinical supervision.

One of the major issues with these master programmes is that patients may be confused by these master titles where in fact they did not lead to orthodontic specialist registration. The four presenters tried to bring an objective overview of the specific situation in their countries based on a structured presentation giving info on the responsible person running the master, costs, duration, credits, teaching hours, number of students... and whether these programmes offer recognition.

3. (SK) Discussion in break-out groups

Professor S. Kiliaridis divided the participants in 5 break-out discussion groups and distributed 5 main topics for discussion. Each group will primarily discuss two topics: a primary and a secondary topic. The former needs to be extensively discussed during the break-out session and reported on in the plenary session by the group that was assigned this topic as primary topic. The group that was assigned this topic as secondary topic will next open the discussion in the plenary session by adding arguments or confirming positions on this specific topic. Eventually, participation of the audience is requested. The following 5 topics were distributed among 5 break-out groups.

1. ERASMUS-LIGHT TEACHING CURRICULUM? The Erasmus programme for postgraduate education in orthodontics has been designed many years ago and was recently updated in the EJO 2014. It seems that there is common understanding among orthodontic educators that these guidelines are well defined and relevant. But is this actually correct? Is there indeed agreement on the fact that these are minimum criteria for orthodontic training? Or do we believe that some sort of Erasmus-light concept exists? Should students spend 3 to - in some countries - 4 years full time training including a minimum of 50 self-treated orthodontic cases or can theoretical and clinical training be reduced? Is an Erasmus-light programme conceivable?
2. TRANSPARENCY of CONTENT and OUTCOME? Should students know what to expect when about to register for an orthodontic training programme? Is there a need to have relevant information at hand on goals and content of a specific training programme? Should that information be readily available, i.e. through a specific website dedicated to the programme? Are guidelines for setting up such websites needed? And can such guidelines be enforced? In other words should potential students know what to expect from a specific training programme in terms of theoretical and practical education, registration rates, specialist recognition, ...? What are the questions to ask when considering orthodontic training programmes in Europe (FAQ's)? Should there be guidelines for prospective applicants on what to ask and look for? From the perspective of the orthodontic educators, it may be perfectly normal to organise a master course covering theoretical education in orthodontics. It may happen that courses leading to a specialist education are organised in parallel with courses not leading to specialist education and that NEBEOP full membership of the former is used in advertisement for the latter.
3. ADVANTAGES VERSUS DISADVANTAGES AT PROFESSIONAL LEVEL What is the effect of these programmes on our profession in the long run? Do they affect general orthodontists' reputation in society? And what about the affiliated university's fame? Is there a downside to be expected? One could argue that such a course may give insight on one's own limitations when following the course. On the other hand, most participants pay a lot to obtain the degree, not with the intention to realise that more training might be necessary, but to start

practicing orthodontics in real patients. Is there a risk for increased litigation?

4. **ETHICAL MATTERS AT PATIENT LEVEL?** Many of the orthodontic training programmes lead to a Master diploma in Orthodontics but not all give access to a specialist title. This can be potentially confusing, certainly from a patient point of view. Especially when these students call themselves “masters” in orthodontics, although specialist title is not within reach. Does this create an ethical problem? What could be undertaken not to mislead patients? Is patient’s trust at risk? What are the benefits or risks for the patient? Should there be guidelines for patients on standard of care?
5. **OUTCOME DISSEMINATION** How could the outcome of these discussions be made known to the profession and the general public? Is there a task for universities to play a more active role in this dissemination? Can the EOS, EFOSA, NEBEOP play a role? Could the national dental society play an active role?

4. (SK) Plenary report and discussion.

Professor Kiliaridis coordinated the discussions of the five topics.

ERASMUS-LIGHT TEACHING CURRICULUM?

There is consensus that the Erasmus guidelines for an orthodontic postgraduate curriculum are a minimum standard. Educators agree that all proposals that are less than the minimum standard are unacceptable. It is stated that the Erasmus programme should be the framework for structured programmes in orthodontic training. Training should at least take as long as treatment duration since it is essential that students get experience in all aspects of orthodontic treatment, retention included. Erasmus-light courses only provide an isolated segment of orthodontic teaching.

It is essential to educate the general public on what is a good orthodontist or a good treatment. People should know more details about training in order for them to be able to make a well informed decision on which professional is going to perform the orthodontic treatment.

It is also proposed to provide more time for research during training because it stimulates critical thinking during education. Cherry-picking courses does not provide a comprehensive overview of the field and does not develop critical thinking skills.

TRANSPARENCY of CONTENT and OUTCOME?

Discussions can be summarized into the statement that there is a need for clear and transparent information regarding what these short courses have to offer. It should be clear to prospective students, i.e. what the tuition fees are, what the total programme hours are for theoretical, clinical and preclinical teaching (180 ECTS), whether students are afterwards eligible for the professional title or not [and there should also be information on the website about or a link to the specific legal rules for obtaining professional recognition locally], whether direct clinical supervision is offered, how many ECTS are provided,

There is a role to play for governments by being more transparent and providing clear information, and for patients by being more critical and asking the right questions. Target info for health professionals and patients could be provided.

ADVANTAGES VERSUS DISADVANTAGES AT PROFESSIONAL LEVEL

The discussion concentrates on the fact that the profession has to deal with these short courses as – according to the Bologna Agreement - they are legal when accredited as a master program

by a university. It should be clear that students really know what they are participating in. They must know that specific fast track courses do not lead to specialist registration. They must really know what they are participating in.

On the other hand patients should be notified and informed. Professional associations and universities could put information on what an orthodontist is on their website, educating patients. One cannot claim that these courses are no good, but one can certainly state that these courses have nothing to do with specialist training.

There is consensus that these short track courses downgrade our profession. The question that should be asked is whether patients experience the difference between an orthodontist and a person who is not an orthodontist. Therefore orthodontic societies should try to educate the public about the difference between both.

ETHICAL MATTERS AT PATIENT LEVEL

Ethics may be perceived in a different way between countries, but there are no studies on this matter. Advertisement may be confusing to the patient and might create an ethical problem. The wish is expressed to have guidelines for patients. National societies may play an important role in this.

There is also a role for NEBEOP that might contribute with information on which universities or institutes organize a certified programme based on a structured Erasmus based full time orthodontic programme of minimum 180 ECTS.

OUTCOME DISSEMINATION

Professional organizations will have to play an important role in the dissemination process. This holds true for national dental associations, orthodontic societies, and consumer organizations. The public has to know who is a well-trained professional, but the question remains who will provide this information?

5. (GW) Conclusions and closure of the meeting

Professor Willems concluded the meeting by summarizing the discussions:

There is overall consensus that the Erasmus guidelines for training programmes in orthodontics are minimum standards. Nobody wants to go for less!

The profession is not embracing these Erasmus light programmes because they differ from normal Erasmus based structured training programmes in Orthodontics in that they do not provide a comprehensive overview of the field and do not develop critical thinking. Fast track programmes simply lack time to educate students at that level.

National societies play a crucial role in informing the public. Firstly, they could provide transparency on content of these fast track programmes by assembling the correct information and targeting health professionals, patients and future students. Secondly, they could disseminate information on specialist recognition in their country. Consumer organizations could also play a role if they are well-informed by the professional organizations.

Finally all four reporters thanked the members present and invited everybody for the 13th European Orthodontic Teachers' Forum in Edinburgh. Colleagues with suggestions on educational topics for the next meeting are welcomed to mail their ideas to nebeop_eotf@protonmail.com

Professor Stavros Kiliaridis
Professor Anne Marie Kuijpers-Jagtman
Professor Pertti Pirttiniemi
Professor Guy Willems

If there is a new program director or head of department, as a result of the departure of the previous one, please forward the contact details of this new program director / head of department (first & last name, title, address, e-mail or e-mail address of the department) to: NEBEOP_EOTF@ProtonMail.com