EUMED connect

EUROPEAN GENETICS FOUNDATION
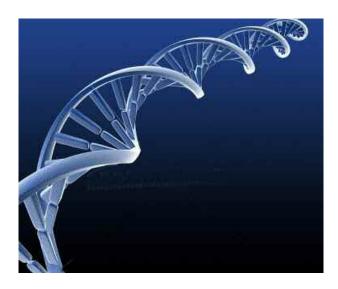
eum@dis

EUROPEAID
CO-OPERATION OFFICE

EUMEDCONNECT Case Study:
Supporting medical e-learning in the Mediterranean region

Genetic medicine and cancer prevention form one of the most rapidly growing fields of medicine and the European Commission has helped to create a new network to share scientific expertise and resources and to establish genetic centres of excellence in the Mediterranean region.

The EuMed Cancer – GeMed Network project

Europe's researchers have grown used to sharing information and working collaboratively using the high-speed GÉANT2 data network. But up till now medical researchers and practitioners in the neighbouring Mediterranean region have not had such opportunities to access the latest learning. Limited national telecommunications infrastructures and commercial internet access charges acted as a barrier to involvement and collaboration, inhibiting the improvement of patient services.

Through its EUMEDIS initiative, the European Commission has funded the EuMed Cancer – GeMed Network project, led by the European Genetics Foundation (EGF), to help develop centres of excellence in genetics in Mediterranean countries. The project is helping to train health professionals by providing the chance for students in each country to attend specialised courses and practical workshops without cost. These courses are delivered online in real time using the high speed EUMEDCONNECT backbone network which links 11 countries in the region. These courses are later made available, again via EUMEDCONNECT, to a wider group of practitioners and students.

The EuMed Cancer – GeMed Network project shows how EUMEDCONNECT helps foster collaboration and accelerate internet development by providing excellent network connectivity, bandwidth and coverage. The project could not have succeeded without this environment and geneticists and students can now share learning freely, with easy access to data and to fellow researchers across GÉANT2's pan-European network.

EUMEDCONNECT is a high capacity internet network, dedicated to researchers and academics, that links Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Malta, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey to form the first research and education network for the Mediterranean region. EUMEDCONNECT aims to reduce disparities in network access and so increase academic collaboration in the region. EUMEDCONNECT also provides access to researchers and other students across Europe and internationally via connections to the GÉANT2 network.

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GÉANT2

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The project has established an active network of 16 partner research centres in genetics, each featuring a lecture hall connected through EUMEDCONNECT to the European School of Genetic Medicine's main training centre in Bertinoro di Romagna, Italy.

Training health professionals

The primary goal was the training of health professionals and a programme of nine courses and three workshops reflected both universal and regional needs. Courses were delivered online, using EUMEDCONNECT to support specialised multi-casting of lectures and live streaming of video images, enabling students in schools, hospitals and institutions to participate interactively. More than 130 people have completed the full programme. Online versions of the courses extend the benefits even more widely, enabling students and researchers to access course materials at any time and to participate in online discussion forums and special interest groups that further enhance collaboration.

Going further

In recognition of GeMed Network's success, the European Commission has agreed to fund the MedGeNet (Euro-Mediterranean Network for Genetic Services) project for two years from 2007. MedGeNet will develop expertise in clinical and cancer genetics by sharing knowledge and technology and requires a common information/communication environment to facilitate collaborative research, diagnostic activities, exchange of data and use of internet based tools and services. EUMEDCONNECT will again provide connectivity and support applications such as genetic telecounselling and digital microscopy.

EUMEDCONNECT – a platform for success

With the simple access and extensive bandwidth that EUMEDCONNECT provides, the latest training, discussions, findings and investigations in any field of study can now be shared between students, researchers and practitioners. EUMEDCONNECT exists to foster collaboration among research and academic institutions in the region and to help address the digital divide by providing connections to Europe and internationally through its links to GÉANT2.

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Without the access to bandwidth that EUMEDCONNECT provides, sharing research knowledge and expertise was difficult and slow. By enabling easy access to specialist research and training modules and events, EUMEDCONNECT is helping to uplift the understanding and practice of clinicians to the direct benefit of patients throughout the region.
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Dr Michele Bianco, Managing Director, European Genetics Foundation

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With the dissemination of scientific activities via the internet the whole world is becoming a small village. The students thoroughly enjoyed watching lectures by international figures who are leaders in their fields and having the opportunity to interact with them.

We all feel very grateful for the facilities of spreading knowledge provided by this project and hope that it will be extended, which will have a great impact on the prevention of genetic diseases in our Euro- Mediterranean region.
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Samia A. Temtamy, Professor of Human Genetics, National Research Centre, Egypt

Find out more

To learn more about EUMEDCONNECT and education and research networking, visit **www.eumedconnect.net**

Find out more about the GeMed Network and online specialist training courses in genetics from: **www.eurogene.org:8080/eumedis/**

DANTE is the non-profit organisation that operates the GÉANT2 network and manages the EUMEDCONNECT project. Further information about DANTE and its activities can be found at **www.dante.net**

www.eumedconnect.net