

How to start a Young GI Section in your country – A cookbook

United European Gastroenterology Journal
2017, Vol. 5(6) 910–912
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DOI: 10.1177/2050640617731720
journals.sagepub.com/home/ueg



“Those who have the youth on their side control the future”; this quote probably says it all. No organisation has a future without active involvement of the younger people that will shape the future of the organisation. Historically, doctors close to retirement led many medical societies. And although experience can be an important factor to defend this policy, the final years before retirement are usually not the most flexible ones. Therefore, we see more and more organisations involving young people and preparing them for leadership at an age of 40 years or even younger. UEG is no exception to this development. Since 2014 UEG has had a Young Talent Group (YTG), and most committees and soon also the UEG council have a representation of the YTG on their committees. These young people are invited to attend all meetings, actively participate in the discussions, help to prepare a new strategic plan for 2019–2022 and take joint responsibility for UEG activities and successes.

In this edition of the UEG journal you will find an article on how to start a Young GI Section (YGIS) in societies, written by the YTG. Maybe your first reaction will be: “Is this really necessary? Will this not happen naturally?” My personal opinion is that it is indeed necessary to stimulate this development. Maybe quite a few societies already have a YGIS but without a doubt many other societies do not have such a section yet. UEG can assist here in supporting the development of YGIS in all our 47 National Member Societies and in our 16 specialist member societies as well. The cookbook in this issue of the journal helps young GIs and will raise awareness of its importance with the older gastroenterologists. I look very much forward to fostering this important development and call on you to involve young people in your societies. Through stimulating this development we prepare the leadership for the future and they will be better prepared than we were at a younger age.

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The Young GI Section

According to the Europe-wide survey conducted by the Young Talent Group¹ trainees in gastroenterology and hepatology have poor influence on their own education and career possibilities in many UEG-member countries, and there is a great demand for additional Young GI Sections. The survey indicated that at present only 50% of the national societies have a dedicated YGIS, and of the existing national YGIS, only a few have a voice in their own National Society.

As for similar young groups in specialist societies, the YTG strives to promote the formation of national YGIS and to increase their influence in the National Society, and also to develop collaboration with YTG and UEG. The national YGIS is the natural future ambassador to the YTG.

The benefits

The benefits of having an official YGIS for you as a young gastroenterologist include having a voice in your learning and education, and ensuring that this is harmonised on a national and pan-European level, increasing awareness of career and educational opportunities and providing a platform for networking at an earlier stage in your career, both between peers and with senior colleagues, which will help you plan your career pathway and ensure you obtain the most from your training.

Networking is important because we motivate each other, and learn a lot when meeting and discussing our daily life as residents, perhaps inequalities are found, and maybe also solutions? The YGIS is the forum where you can engage the values that you want to see in the future. For example, if you want to see gender- and/or regional balance in the National Society, start with having a balanced YGIS board.

Having a national YGIS is also a strategic and an effective way to motivate and foster residents to become the leaders of tomorrow, and it provides a continuous recruitment of motivated gastroenterologists. Giving them a voice in the National Society increases the cross-beneficial interaction and creates a stimulating atmosphere for all members. Thus, in the opinion of the YTG the participation of young gastroenterologists in National Societies should be a natural thing.

The obstacles

One of the important findings of the survey was that in certain countries there are many obstacles to the development of a YGIS and so the aim of this cookbook is to provide guidance on how to overcome these blocks and get the most out of the group they set up. Three major issues identified by the study included a lack of resources/funding, a lack of proactive young trainees and a perceived lack of interest from the National Society.

The cookbook

In response to the results from the survey, the YTG want to contribute with a cookbook in *How to start a Young GI Section*. Hopefully, it will inspire young readers.

1. Aims and bylaws

Become a national forum for residents of gastroenterology and hepatology, and help younger residents plan their career and educational program. Strive for a more harmonised education nationally, inventory the needs and gaps in the educational program and attempt to find methods to fill those gaps. Be the voice of GI residents in the National Society and become the natural ambassador to YTG and UEG.

2. Board members, posts, and terms.

- The first six months: It is important to have a well-defined board structure from the start, with clear posts, for example a president, a vice president, a treasurer and a secretary; this is a resourceful way of sharing assignments, together with a number of board members (Sweden has as an example nine YGIS board members in total).
- After one year: It is ideal that at least the president of the YGIS should have an acting post in the National Society board. Having a gender- and geographically balanced YGIS board is also preferable and a nominating committee is an appropriate way to select new board nominees. To promote a flexible and energetic board it is preferable that the term should be two to three years. This encourages board members to be efficient and gives the chance to motivated members to be elected during their residency. A balance of new and more experienced board members is also desirable.

3. Meetings

- The first six months: It is efficient to have both attending meetings and conference calls with

board members. This will ensure that any tasks set up at meetings have specific deadlines and any problems that arise can be discussed both on an informal and formal level. It is important to document matters that are discussed during meetings for utter transparency.

- After one year: At least one annual meeting of all YGIS members should be held, and if possible at the same time as the National GI congress (if it exists). At the annual meeting the annual report for your organisation can be presented; it is important to present the progress of the YGIS, its activities and economy. The board nominees can here be elected by democratic vote. Try also to organise social events with all members, take the chance to meet each other informally at for example national/inter-national congresses.

4. Finance

To be able to hold seminars, give travel grants, organise conferences, social events, etc., finance is crucial.

- The first six months: If possible, request finance from the National Society. The industry can sponsor your initiatives, but it is important to have a clear agenda and transparency.
- After one year: An annual member charge is also an option and should in this case be organised by the treasurer, who should also present earnings and costs at the annual meeting. Here the work of attracting new members is important. With respect to funding and the recognition of the YGIS, feedback to YTG and UEG can also be helpful.

5. Communication

The YGIS should have a section of their own in the *National Gastroenterology Journal* (if such one exists), as this improves the possibility to spread information to the residents. If the National Society has a *website*, this is a good platform to also have a YGIS subdivision. A *newsletter sent by email* is also a good way to remind and to inform residents on all the actualities, and/or having a *Facebook group* is also fun and good for supporting networking.

6. How can YGIS make a difference?

The YGIS should participate in the planning of the national resident program of gastroenterology and hepatology. It is important to identify the lacks in the current educational programme and help to organise seminars and courses to cover the needs and/or try to find ways to get travel grants so that as many residents

as possible can attend, for example, UEG educational initiatives. A clear compendium for the GI-program is available at the European Board of Gastroenterology and Hepatology (EBGH); *The Blue Book*, which is a guideline intended to help harmonise the education for gastroenterologists and hepatologists throughout Europe,² could act as a learning base for seminars/courses organised by the YGIS.

Use also UEG E-learning, classroom courses, and the postgraduate course at UEG Week that also has *The Blue Book* as a learning base. All this can help us to achieve harmonisation of GI education nationally as well as throughout Europe, something that the survey showed us was a valued future need. In addition, we should not be in competition for training opportunities; we should try to make access equal and fair for everyone. Every movement starts with an organisation.

References

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