

# A joyful academic tour throughout the 23<sup>rd</sup> European Conference on General Thoracic Surgery

Chao-Xiu (Melanie) He

Editorial Office, AME Publishing Company, Guangzhou 510000, China

Correspondence to: Chao-Xiu (Melanie) He, Science Editor, Editorial Office, AME Publishing Company, Room 11, 14/F, Chuangzhan Harbor Building, No. 82, Jiangnan Main Road, Haizhu District, Guangzhou 510000, China. Email: hecx@amegroups.com.

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The 23<sup>rd</sup> European Conference on General Thoracic Surgery was successfully held by the European Society of Thoracic Surgery (ESTS) from May 29 to June 3, 2015 in Lisbon, Portugal. As one of the largest global reunions of general thoracic surgeons, this grand conference included extraordinary guest lectures given by experts invited from all over the world, joint sessions with international scientific societies, working group sessions and techno meetings. The most exciting part was the 7<sup>th</sup> Joint Collaborative Post-Graduate Course organized by Dr. Dirk Van Raemdonck and Dr. Alan Sihoe, which attracted every nerve of contestants and audiences and provoked highly interactive discussions.

The 2015 ESTS conference also featured with various joint sessions, such as the ESTS-IASLC Joint Session, ESTS-EACTA Joint Session, ESTS-CATS Joint Session, and ESTS-STC Joint Session. Hopefully, these joint sessions would contribute to communicate up-to-date scientific progresses and clinical experience among thoracic surgeons from different regions of the world. Moreover, the conference also included a special nurse symposium in order to improve patient care and advance health outcomes (*Figure 1*).

## Novel-formed postgraduate symposium: competing for Masters Cup

The Postgraduate Symposium was held on May 31, a day before the opening ceremony of the 23<sup>rd</sup> European Conference on General Thoracic Surgery. As per the rules of the Postgraduate Symposium, three teams respectively from Europe, The Americas and Asia would contest for the Masters Cup via a question-and-answer form in four sessions. Each team had 6 trainee members and 6 senior



**Figure 1** The Opening Ceremony of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Congress of European Society of Thoracic Surgery (ESTS) began with traditional Portuguese Fado, which is a symbol of Portugal and has been declared part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

members, with totally 36 contestants. “Each team would take turns to ask the other two teams a series of multiple-choice questions on a challenging clinical scenario. In each of the competing teams, trainee members and the senior member (renowned surgeons of that continent) could discuss the answer, and the audience could also participate actively in providing an answer. Once the teams have declared their answer, the correct answer would be revealed—along with a clear evidence-based explanation of why that answer had to be the correct one (1). Three teams went head-to-head in 3 rounds of competition, and the result came that the Asian Team and the American Team were the top 2 teams advancing to the Final Round to compete for the Masters Cup. After the strained final round, the Asian Team led by Dr. Sanghoon Jheon finally won the champion and gained the Masters Cup. This was



**Figure 2** At the 2015 ESTS Postgraduate Symposium, team members were thinking and discussing about a challenging case question. (A) Asian Team; (B) American Team; (C) European Team.



**Figure 3** The Asian Team finally won the Masters Cup of Postgraduate Symposium.



**Figure 4** At the ESTS Dinner Party, Dr. Lieven Depypere was awarded as the best player of 2015 ESTS Postgraduate Symposium.

the first time in the ESTS history that the Asian Team has won the Masters Cup (Figures 2,3).

Nonetheless, the victory of Asian Team was indispensable from the efforts behind to train and choose the outstanding contestants to participate in the competition. Before the

23<sup>rd</sup> European Conference on General Thoracic Surgery, Dr. Alan Sihoe and AME Publishing Company have worked together to organized “AME Special Competition” in China to select excellent junior thoracic surgeons representing China in the Asia Team and prepared for the Postgraduate Symposium in Lisbon. Finally, Dr. Azmat Rustam and Dr. Xinghua Cheng won out of the 27 contestants and were recommended to join the Asian Team.

Let’s look back to the awards of the Postgraduate Symposium in Lisbon. Besides the Masters Cup awarded to the Asian Team, there was also another prize awarded to the single junior member who had the best performance throughout the contest. This year, the junior member Dr. Lieven Depypere excelled as the best oralist and won an AME-sponsored training program in The First Affiliated Hospital of Guangzhou Medical University with guidance of Dr. Jianxing He (Figure 4).

The novel contesting form of ESTS Postgraduate Symposium has broken through conventional Postgraduate Course: giving series of lectures by renowned experts. Instead, it applied the question-answer form to push contestants and audiences to look for the best management of a challenging clinical case and explain why to choose the answer. This way has effectively trained surgeons’ ability to cope a clinical case with their knowledge and experience in an evidence-based manner. And unexpected entertainment was triggered along with their profound engagement in the competitive contest. Just as what has been said by Dr. Alan Sihoe, “(Giving lectures) this one-directional, non-interactive method of information delivery is potentially boring and may not interest audiences enough to hold their attention. Instead, if knowledge is imparted in a ‘problem-solving’ manner, by framing a real-life clinical scenario and asking a clinically relevant question about it, then the use



**Figure 5** At the ESTS-CATS Joint Session, Dr. Toni Lerut (from Leuven University, former president of ESTS) shared his experience and views about his visit in China.



**Figure 6** The JTD special issue dedicated to the 2015 European Conference on General Thoracic Surgery

of knowledge to solve the question renders that knowledge more vivid and important” (1). This is true of the ESTS Postgraduate Symposium this year.

### Fruitful communication between European and Chinese thoracic surgeons

Chinese engagement on the European Conference on

### He. The 23<sup>rd</sup> European Conference on General Thoracic Surgery

General Thoracic Surgery is increasing as we could see more and more oral presentations and posters have come from China in recent years. Dr. Alan Sihoe and Dr. Lunxu Liu of West China University have chaired a Joint Session of the ESTS and the Chinese Association of Thoracic Surgeons (CATS) at the 2015 European Conference on General Thoracic Surgery. This was the first time an ESTS-CATS Joint Session was held on the European Conference on General Thoracic Surgery (Figure 5).

In this session, Dr. Toni Lerut shared his experience and views about his visit in China. Dr. Alan Sihoe introduced the progresses and issues occurred in the clinical researches of Chinese thoracic surgery; Dr. Jianxing He updated the development of thoracoscopy surgery in China; Dr. Lun-xu Liu presented the techniques of how to manage complications occurred in VATS surgery. Dr. Fengtao Fang from Shanghai Chest Hospital introduced current surgical treatments for thymic tumor in China. The ESTS and CATS also had an in-depth conversation on the further cooperation in the field of annual conferences of both associations, advanced training and clinical researches, in order to build a robust platform for the communication and education of thoracic surgeons between Europe and China.

### ESTS & AME

Happily, *Journal of Thoracic Disease (JTD)* has brought out a special issue dedicated to the 2015 European Conference on General Thoracic Surgery under the joint efforts of Dr. Enrico Ruffini (President of the 2015 ESTS Conference) and Dr. Alessandro Brunelli (General Secretary of ESTS). And this special issue was allocated in the conference bag as a conference reading to every delegate (Figure 6).

Moreover, during the four-day exhibition of the ESTS conference, the Book *Lung Cancer, Robotic Thoracic Surgery*, as well as *JTD*'s sister journals *Annals of Cardiothoracic Surgery (ACS)*, *Annals of Translational Medicine (ATM)* etc. published by AME Publishing Company were popular to attendees worldwide (Figure 7).

This grand conference was also an excellent chance for us to meet and thank our Editorial Board Members and authors of our journals and books (Figure 8). And with this great chance, we have been honored to have interviews with various key opinion experts on thoracic surgery and nursing, such as Dr. Gaetano Rocco, Dr. Gonzalo Varela, Dr. John White, and Dr. Eric Lim, etc.

And most impressively, for me, it was the intense



**Figure 7** At the AME Exhibit Booth during the ESTS conference, attendees were interested in and consulting about the journals and books published by AME Publishing Company.



**Figure 8** AME interviews with various key opinion experts on thoracic surgery and nursing. (A) Dr. Gaetano Rocco and AME Editor Grace Li; (B) Dr. Gonzalo Varela, the President of 2015-2016 ESTS conference accepted the interview by AME Editor Grace Li; (C) Dr. Eric Lim from The Royal Brompton Hospital was at the interview by AME Editor Chao-Xiu (Melanie) He; (D) Group photo of Dr. Alessandro Brunelli (second left), Dr. Pierre-Emmanuel Falcoz (third left) Dr. Kostas Papagiannopoulos (five left) and AME Editors Grace Li (fourth left) and Chao-Xiu (Melanie) He (first left).

happiness and interest throughout the conference, which provoked my mind thinking of a word: Happy academy is realizable through enthusiasm and creative forms. At the end of the conference, I had the privilege to take a precious

photo with the conference faculty, who always keep me memorizing the theory of happy academy. They are thoracic surgeons, revered experts, but also happy men, and good friends (*Figure 9*)!



**Figure 9** AME Editor Chao-Xiu (Melanie) He (first left), Dr. Alessandro Brunelli (second left), Dr. Enrico Ruffini (third left), and Dr. Gonzalo Varela (fourth left).

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None.

### Footnote

*Conflicts of Interest:* The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

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