



Impressions from the 31st EASDec meeting in Odense

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Diabetic retinopathy (DR) is the most frequent complication in diabetes and a feared cause of blindness. Systematic screening for sight-threatening DR is needed to identify patients, often free of symptoms, early enough to introduce timely treatments to prevent irreversible vision loss. Given the increasing prevalence of diabetes, having multiple clinicians and researchers throughout Europe engaged in this important task is vital. The European Association for the Study of Diabetes Eye Complications Study Group (EASDec) was formed to meet these challenges. Since its formation in 1990, annual EASDec meetings have gathered dedicated ophthalmologists, diabetologists, and scientists from around the world.



Compelling arguments by EASDec President Simó

The hybrid EASDec meeting in Odense Concert Hall on the 28th–30th of October last year was the 31st consecutive annual meeting and the first hosted in the Nordics since 2006. Despite the pandemic, the 2021 conference received the highest number of attendees ever. The 215 participants came from 22 different countries, including representatives from all five Nordic countries. For many attendees, this conference was the first in-person scientific meeting since the onset of the pandemic.



The latest developments discussed by Dr. Torp and Dr. Wied

As an important part of the meeting, EASDec collaborated with the 5th Conference on Screening for Diabetic Retinopathy in Europe. This symposium addressed the ongoing effort established by the 2005 St. Vincent Declaration, which asserted that European countries should “reduce the risk of visual impairment due to diabetic retinopathy... through [a] systematic programme of screening reaching at least 80% of the population with diabetes using trained professionals and personnel universal access to laser therapy.” The 2021 conference in Odense, the first since the 2016 meeting in Manchester, gave the national representatives from all European countries an opportunity to present national initiatives and discuss future landmarks to combat diabetes-induced visual loss and blindness.

Before the official opening of the meeting and the welcome reception at the brand-new Hans Christian Andersen House, the first day of the meeting contained several sponsored sessions on hot topics, including ocular and systemic treatment of diabetes, inflammation in the diabetic eye, and the potential of ultra-wide field imaging of DR.

The second day included a variety of talks based on the 88 submitted abstracts. Although most presenters attended in person, presentations were also live-streamed from the US, Japan, Iceland, and the UK. The morning sessions on experimental and translational research were followed by epidemiological presentations and the invited Eva Kohner Lecture given by Professor Simon Harding, in honor of the EASDec-founder, who, sadly, passed away shortly before the meeting.



Former EASDec President Harding

A central part of the EASDec meeting is the annual poster session, which enables students and younger scientists to engage with more senior colleagues while presenting cutting-edge research on DR. This year, 53 virtual and physical posters were presented on topics including experimental research, epidemiology, medical and surgical treatment of DR, retinal imaging, and various aspects of DR screening.



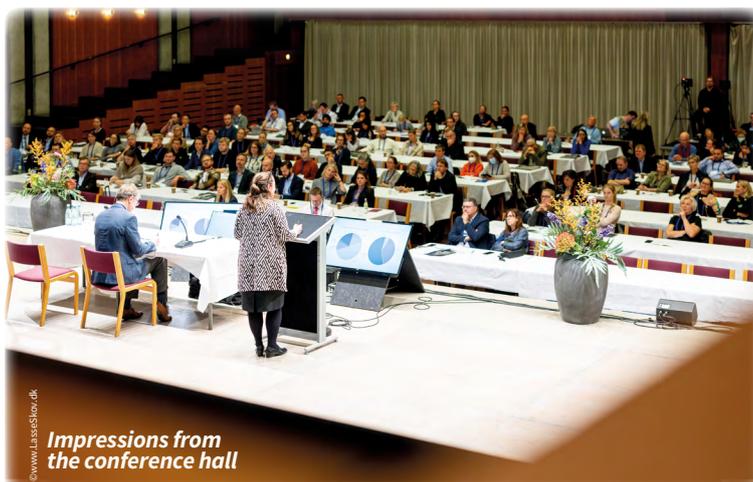
Ophthalmologists dedicated to diabetic eye care

After the poster presentations was a session on clinical studies and novel treatments and two excellent keynote lectures. Professor Ryo Kawasaki from Osaka, Japan discussed the translation of epidemiological studies into clinical care, and Professor Einar Stefánsson from Reykjavik, Iceland described the importance of individualized DR-screening. These thought-provoking talks were food for conversation at the conference dinner at Restaurant Nordatlanten, which gave room for vivid scientific discussions and socializing in a relaxed atmosphere celebrating Nordic cuisine and culture.



EASDec President-Elect Peto

After three extensive days, the meeting concluded on Saturday with several talks on ocular and systemic care in diabetes, novel methods in retinal imaging, and the rapidly evolving field of artificial intelligence in DR screening. Associate Professor Patrice Fort from Michigan elegantly took the audience on a detailed journey through the world of multi-omics in DR, before a symposium presenting the results of a large Danish national registry-linkage study. The meeting concluded with the prize ceremony for best poster.



Impressions from the conference hall



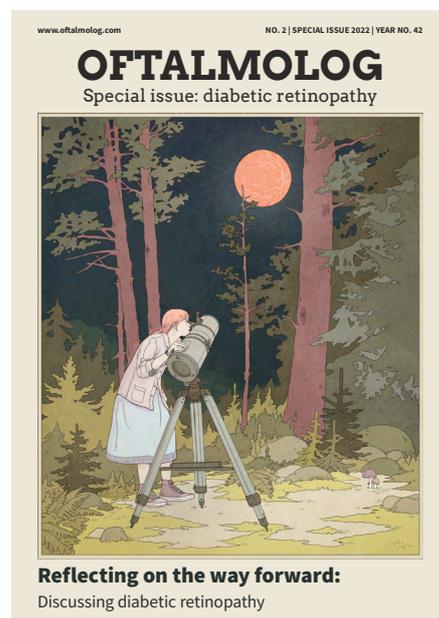
Hosting the 31st EASDec meeting has been a wonderful experience, and I am delighted to have been given the honor to act as the Guest Editor of this special issue of *Ophthalmolog*. I hope you will enjoy the following short presentations from the meeting as much as I did during EASDec. With 88 abstracts, it was not easy to decide, but these were among the very best and include the award-winners for best abstract and best poster.

Enjoy, and I hope to see you at a future EASDec meeting!



Jakob Grauslund
Guest Editor

- ▶ **7** Seeing the way forward: OCT angiography and oximetry as non-invasive diagnostic tools in non-proliferative diabetic retinopathy
- ▶ **12** Navigated retinal photocoagulation for treating proliferative diabetic retinopathy and diabetic macular edema: Findings from two randomized clinical trials
- ▶ **18** The difference between night and day: Circadian rhythms in diabetic retinopathy
- ▶ **26** Exploring the proteome of diabetic macular edema



COVER:

The idea for this cover arose from the theme of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes Eye Complications Study Group (EASDec) 2021 conference, Odense's native son, fairy tale writer Hans Christian Andersen. Therefore, the style mirrors that of old fairy tales. The woman in the image gazes into the darkness to explore the retinal image found in the moon.

The illustrator, Agnes Guttormsgaard says this about the cover: "I liked the thought of the telescope as a metaphor for how we use technology to make the invisible visible. This is a reference to how the field of ophthalmology entails both examining the eyes and literally giving people better sight, which I thought was pretty clever. The fairytale style made the project a fun challenge!"