Genetic Counseling SIG

The International Society for Prenatal Diagnosis launched its Genetic Counseling Special Interest Group (SIG) in Washington D.C. in 2015. There were approximately 100 attendees at our first SIG meeting. The Co-Chairs, Charlotta Ingvaldsen and Judy Jackson, met for the first time at that meeting and have worked during the last year to make other genetic counselors in North America and Europe aware of ISPD and the annual education conference.

Many prenatal genetic counselors have told us that they were unaware of ISPD and the conference. The prenatal counselors we have spoken with who attended the conference in 2015, had all positive comments about the meeting. Once a prenatal GC attends an ISPD conference, we believe most will make a great effort to attend another in the future. We believe making counselors aware of ISPD and the annual education conference will greatly improve participation in ISPD and attendance at the annual education conferences. We have been spreading the word about ISPD to one counselor at a time.

During the past year our SIG had an article published in Perspectives on Genetic Counseling. This is NSGC’s quarterly, members-only digital magazine. The article was distributed to over 3,000 genetic counselors. The article focused on the highlights of the meeting as well as the international contribution and participation in the meeting. The upcoming meetings in Berlin and San Diego were mentioned as well.

We also designed a survey, which was submitted to European genetic counselors to assess their awareness of ISPD, and what topics they are interested in learning more about. Most counselors surveyed were unaware of ISPD and reported that they would be interested in attending our upcoming conferences. The results of this survey were submitted to ISPD.

We have worked during the last year to develop a positive relationship with the National Society of Genetic Counselor’s prenatal SIG. We took part in two webinars, for which category 1 CEUs were awarded. This exposure gave us the opportunity to mention ISPD again. NSGC’s prenatal SIG is very interested in collaborating with us on different projects.

In the following year ISPD should consider presenting webinars that both ISPD and NSGC can access. NSGC can easily organize awarding category 1 CEUs for GCs who attend the webinar. ISPD would have an opportunity to mention ISPD and the upcoming meetings during the webinar. NSGC’s prenatal SIG would be very excited for ISPD to contribute to their webinars.
As the two co-chairs are from Europe and North America, we need to identify a way to reach out to counselors from other regions. We have submitted this recommendation previously to the board of directors. The board should consider having regional GCs who represent and promote ISPD in that region. All of the GC reps could periodically communicate with each other and share ideas about how to promote ISPD. ISPD should consider waiving the membership fee for these GC representatives if they are not reimbursed for it by their employers.

Most counselors have only one conference reimbursed annually and often plan one year in advance which meeting they will attend. We should be aggressive regarding marketing in the late summer early fall for next year’s conference. We should consider a “save the date” campaign for GCs in North America.

Judy will attend NSGC’s annual conference in Seattle and will aggressively promote the conference in San Diego. NSGC’s prenatal SIG has agreed to let us share their table in the exhibitor’s hall to promote ISPD and the upcoming meeting.