

# Wound Healing Association in Latvia



The Melngalvju Nams in Riga. The building was destroyed during World War II but has now been reconstructed in its original image.



Meeting in Latvia 2001 (from left): Sergejs Kolesnikovs, Ieva Kabuce, Ints Undris, Tatjana Ivanova, Finn Gottrup, Christina Lindholm, Pauls Bartulis, Henrik J. Nielsen.

Latvia, one of the Baltic countries previously behind the “iron curtain” has the beautifully restored city of Riga as its capital. Riga benefits from a genuine atmosphere of “Old Town”, and also features an exceptionally good museum of medical history.

The population of Latvia, approximately 2,5 million comprising a 54/46% ratio of women to men, is supported by 150 hospitals and 12000 physicians. Of the 150 hospitals 72 are major and of the 12000 doctors 2000 are GPs. Twenty-three percent of the population is between 18-60 years and half a million people are retired; many living on minor pensions. The physicians belong to 90 different associations. In addition there are 15000 nurses in Latvia, belonging to 11 different associations.

As is the case in most European countries, the trends in Latvian Health Care, are towards cutting costs by closing hospital beds, and focusing on home care and GP-run clinics. Until now, wound-care has not been seen as a specialism – dressings are not reimbursed for the patients, and education in wound management has not been specifically addressed. However, this situation is changing as interest in wound healing has been raised by a small group of interested doctors and nurses.

The 2001 EWMA meeting in Dublin was visited by a Latvian delegation, and in December 13, 2001, EWMA was invited to join the first meeting of the proposed Latvian Wound Healing Organization. Approximately 60 physicians and nurses attended the meeting, at which

Finn Gottrup, Christina Lindholm and Henrik Nielsen lectured and represented EWMA. Dr Ints Undris, Dr Sergejs Kolesnikovs and RN Tatjana Ivanova also lectured. A model for the Latvian Wound Treating Organization was proposed and accepted with great enthusiasm by the audience.

On the 3rd of May 2002, the Latvian Wound Treating Organization was officially established. The aims of the Organization are:

- 1) to promote education in wound management among nurses and physicians
- 2) to promote reimbursement for wound care materials
- 3) to increase the involvement of nurses in wound management
- 4) to coordinate wound management among different specialists (surgeons, GPs etc).

This year on October 24, the Organization has organised a study day at which participants will discuss and examine many aspects of pain management and ulcer care. *Christina Lindholm* has been invited to attend as a guest speaker.

The EWMA meeting in Granada was attended by Drs *Undris* and *Kolesnikovs*, and RN *Tatjana Ivanova*. Their enthusiasm for, knowledge of and interest in wound healing is impressive and bodes well for the future of wound-care as a specialism in Latvia.

EWMA welcomes the Latvian Wound Treating Organization as an important associated member organization, and wishes our Latvian colleagues good luck in their important future work. ■



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