

Statement on the qualification of cardiovascular perfusionists

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The European Board of Cardiovascular Perfusion (EBCP) was founded in 1991 by Cardiovascular Perfusionists. Some of the goals of EBCP as an independent body in perfusion education and training are establishing, monitoring and maintaining equality of standards and accreditation of perfusion education programmes as well as issuing a European certificate in perfusion [1]. Currently, 25 countries have delegates to the EBCP.

Due to the historic development of Europe, a multitude of cultural and educational settings exist in general and also in perfusion education and training. These differences include language, organization and structure of the education systems as well as differences in the organization and structure of the health-care systems [2]. Unlike in the USA, where a common curriculum for perfusion education has been established [3], each European country has its own education system. Perfusion education programmes vary not only in content, but also in their academic levels. In only a portion of European countries today perfusionist education is governed by national legislation.

One important Mission goal of EBCP is to liaise with the European Commission in order to achieve the objectives listed above [4]. Therefore, a project has been initiated to identify and to make contact with the relevant department at the European Union (EU) Commission and to design a strategy to increase awareness of a necessary recognition of the profession at European level with the help of a specialized law firm. In an effort to support this strategy, the European Association of Cardio-Thoracic Surgery and the European Association of Cardiothoracic Anaesthesiologists have issued a common Statement on the Qualification of Cardiovascular Perfusionists, signed by the Presidents of both organizations:

Both the European Association of Cardiothoracic Anaesthesiologists (EACTA) and the European Association of Cardio-Thoracic Surgery (EACTS) would like to issue the following statement concerning the qualification of Cardiovascular Perfusionists:

Cardiovascular Perfusionists are health-care professionals who are responsible for maintaining the blood circulation, oxygenation and homeostasis during open heart operations and other types of treatment requiring artificial heart, lung and heart-lung support. Cardiovascular Perfusionists ensure the adequate monitoring of vital signs of the patient, whether adult, child or newborn, together with surgeons and anaesthesiologists. Cardiovascular Perfusionists play an important role in controlling mechanical cardiac assist

devices implanted in patients with end-stage heart failure and in running extracorporeal circulation in patients requiring this support for other interventions, for example liver transplantation, organ perfusion or oncological treatments. Furthermore, these professionals also contribute to improving understanding of the cardiopulmonary bypass (CPB) for cardiac surgery of anaesthesia trainees as well as medical students.

It is of importance that Cardiovascular Perfusionists are adequately trained in order that they acquire both knowledge of the theoretical foundation and practical clinical skills. Although a legal framework for perfusion training exists in some countries, there are significant differences with regards to content and legal requirements at the European level.

For the qualification of Cardiovascular Perfusionists, it is very important that there be a consolidated training and certification process to guarantee the required multifaceted competence. Due to lacking common criteria for perfusionists' accreditation and certification in Europe, professional bodies of Cardiovascular Perfusionists, Cardiac Surgeons and Anaesthesiologists should take action to ensure appropriate training of perfusionists. The quality of perfusionists' service has an important impact on patients' safety and the quality of medical care provided by cardiac surgery teams.

In 1991, the European Board of Cardiovascular Perfusion (EBCP) was established to guarantee a minimum training level of Cardiovascular Perfusionists within Europe. Today, more than 2000 perfusionists are European Board certified and close to 20 perfusion schools are accredited by this Board. The European Board of Cardiovascular Perfusion is the only institution in Europe concerned with monitoring standards of the training process for cardiovascular perfusionists on a European level.

The EBCP certificate may only be obtained after an appropriate academic training programme delivered by accredited European perfusion education programmes has been established. The EBCP examination takes place once a year and at the same time throughout all member countries. The certificate of the European Board is signed by a representative of EACTA, a representative of EACTS and by the Chairman and the General Secretary of EBCP.

Both EACTS and EACTA have close relationships with EBCP. In fact, some anaesthesiologists also work as perfusionists. Both associations have designed specific sessions and postgraduate courses for cardiovascular perfusionists, including lectures, seminars and

practice on simulators to promote continuous education and stimulate research in the field.

Both EACTS and EACTA are committed to cooperating continuously with the EBCP to maintain the standards in perfusion. At the same time, both associations would encourage their members to exert influence on their health institutions and authorities to convince them that only those Cardiovascular Perfusionists holding the European Certificate on Cardiovascular Perfusion (ECCP) should be recruited.

Hence, both EACTS and EACTA would like to ask the regulatory bodies of the European Union to:

(i) recognise EBCP as the European body certifying adequate training in cardiovascular perfusion;

(ii) recognise the EBCP certificate as guaranteeing adequate education and preparation of cardiovascular perfusionists in Europe'.

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