

Nordic conference (NOA) in Reykjavik

Useful and successful

The NOA conference was held in Reykjavik during the 18th to 20th of September 2014. Twenty two participants attended the conference, seven from Denmark, three from Sweden, two from Finland, six from Iceland along with three guests from The Netherlands and one from Romania. There were no attendants from Norway this time.

The conference started with welcoming drinks onboard the old Coast Guard ship Odin which is now a part of the Maritime Museum in Reykjavik. There the chairman of Isilco, Jon Thorkelsson, gave a welcoming speech and explained the procedure of the conference and after that all participants introduced themselves. This was followed by dinner in the restaurant of the museum.

J-pouch

The conference took place in Center Hotel Plaza in the heart of Reykjavik where the foreign participants stayed. The conference started on Friday the 19th with a lecture by Tryggvi B. Stefansson, surgeon. He talked about the making of the J-pouch from the beginning and also mentioned its troubles and treatments for those troubles. He also talked about an Icelandic research on the quality of life for ostomates and the unexpected results from that including the lack of quality of life for ostomates.

The Disabled Peoples Union of Iceland.

A lecture from the DPU in Iceland told about the structure of the DPU and its fight for equality and proper conditions of life for disabled persons including ostomates. The logo of DPU is „Nothing about us without us“ but in Iceland it has been the habit of most governments to hand out social rights and welfare without consulting the people in need for those things.

The second part of the lecture from DPU addressed a more international thing or the UN Covenant on the Rights of Disabled Persons which was signed by the Icelandic government in 2007 but has yet to be made into law in Iceland making it one of four European states not to do so.

The Cancer Union and its Advisory Service.

The Cancer Union of Iceland gave the next lecture which handled about the fight against cancer in Iceland but about half of ostomates have suffered cancer either in the colon or the bladder. The CU started its operations in 1951 and today has one of the best databases in the field of cancer research worldwide. That is based on the easily traceable family lineage in our closely knit and small society. But the lecturer, the CEO of CU, also pointed out that the state was constantly putting less and less money into the health care system.

After that we had an introduction from the Advisory Service of the Cancer Union where cancer patients and their friends and relatives can seek all sorts of advice and help, ranging from advice on how to tackle the costs of being a cancer patient to bereavement after the loss of a loved one.

Stoma nurses at the University Hospital.

At the moment there are three stoma nurses working as such in Iceland and one of them came to the conference and told about their activities for the betterment of life for ostomates. This includes counseling before operations and home visits after operations and all kinds of help therewith. They also have a day care center where ostomates can phone in and make an appointment if they have any troubles.

The Kock's pouch.

Babs Banning and other guests from the Dutch Ostomy Association told about a pressing need to form an international cooperation between ostomates fitted with the Kock's pouch as those operations are performed less frequently each year and the knowledge behind them is slowly disappearing from the arsenal of surgeons all over Europe. This puts ostomates with Kock's pouches sometimes into big troubles when they need assistance with an already fitted kock's pouch. In those counties where the kock's pouch operations have been performed in the past there are only a few doctors with the knowledge and this needs to be researched and the knowledge and expertise maintained. All organizations present agreed that this was a pressing problem and declared their will to support such a project.

Romania.

Isabella Grosu, from the Romanian Ostomy Association told about her work with young ostomates and her project which was funded by the European Union.

Education and entertainment.

On the Friday evening the group was split into two. Those belonging to the 20-40 group went separately for talks, swim, dinner and some other entertainment but the older part had dinner in more quiet surroundings. On Saturday morning talks were concluded and the Danish group showed a short film about the life of a young ostomate. The film is still in the making but looks to be good.

After that it was fun and entertainment for the rest of the day. We visited the Arts Museum of Reykjavik, The National Museum of Iceland, The Phallogical Museum. Olgerdin brewery and lastly we went bowling for an hour or so.

Closing dinner was held on Saturday evening and foreign participants went home on Sunday morning after a few interesting days in Iceland.

