

# Interview with the new President-Elect



Silvio Danese © Silvio Danese

## Silvio Danese

**Position:** President-Elect, 2016–2018  
**Nationality:** Italian  
**Date of birth:** January 10, 1975  
**Past ECCO Positions:** SciCom Member, Secretary

### *What was your motivation for taking up the position of President-Elect?*

Right from the beginning of my GI fellowship I was very intrigued by IBD, and I soon started to commit to this field with the intention of helping patients struggling with these diseases. In my professional life there are three major activities: Clinical practice, research and education (as an academic gastroenterologist). This fits exactly with the three major goals of ECCO. This is why, for me, applying for the ECCO Presidency means once again making a large commitment to the field of IBD.

### *As a future ECCO President, what are your visions for ECCO in the short and long term and what are the next steps in the evolution of ECCO?*

It is true that in recent years ECCO has evolved a lot. It was initially a sort of club of friends, and I still remember when I started as a Y-ECCO Member, with new friends like Séverine, Simon, Daan and many others. That spirit of friendship has been contagious. As a result, ECCO has become THE global IBD society and now has 3,215 members. One of my main goals during my terms of office is to foster further enlargement of ECCO on a global scale, with

greater involvement of our colleagues in the United States and Asia through more proactive interactions with various ECCO Initiatives. Though already in place, these mechanisms should be boosted much more, and this would tremendously advance the field of IBD, particularly in terms of research activities. As a member of IOIBD and having done most of my training in the United States, I firmly believe in international cooperation, as collaboration rather than competition is obviously the key to progress within the IBD field, the promotion of which is our ultimate duty as ECCO Members.

### *What concrete actions/activities will you carry out in order to achieve the main objectives during your terms of office?*

I truly believe that an even greater focus on young members should be considered, as Y-ECCO is the future of ECCO. Active involvement of Y-ECCO is already a reality, but I am convinced that young members should be even more actively involved in all the scientific activities. After all, investing in Y-ECCO is truly investing in the future of ECCO and I will make more efforts to further integrate Y-ECCO into the ECCO Activities. During my terms of office I will try to engage Y-ECCO Members in clinical practice, research and education:

#### **Clinical practice**

The aim is to develop pathways of care across Europe despite the economic challenges. Guidelines have been and will remain instrumental. But we need to move to the next level, developing both tools able to measure quality of care and pathways of care that overcome the fragmentation that may occur from GP to tertiary referral centre. To achieve these goals, more cooperation between EFCCA and ECCO is needed.

#### **Research**

This is a strategic topic. ECCO until now has facilitated “non-sponsored, academic” clinical studies and supported research with grants. However, it is obvious that much more can be done with respect to fund raising campaigns, lobbying at EU level, working more closely with patients and donors as well as with our sister societies. In addition, our long-term relations with EMA foster exchange of knowhow and aim at faster development processes of new drugs. We need more awareness for IBD and this would lead to more resources.

#### **Education**

Here I would make two simple points: (1) we must ensure the spreading of educational activities in multiple countries, particularly where fewer resources are available; (2)

e-Learning needs to be further implemented and educational activities should be expanded to all those areas that are of strategic significance for multidisciplinary of IBD care.

### *What are the things that, in your opinion, make ECCO special/distinguish it from other associations?*

Even though we now have well over 3,200 members, the element of friendship is still contagious and the ECCO Spirit of collaboration in the IBD field is very strong among all members.

### *Who was the person who most influenced you in your career, and how?*

Claudio Fiocchi, my mentor. He taught me that while young fellows need guidance, they must also be allowed the freedom to make mistakes and to learn from those mistakes in order to grow stronger!

In the lab it happens all the time. During my postdoc I had a lot of fun because Claudio felt able to allow me to take forward my enthusiasm for research without limitations.

### *What, in your eyes, have been your biggest professional achievements thus far?*

Recognising the vascular involvement in intestinal inflammation, and how its blockade in multiple ways can be beneficial for IBD therapy. Today we have the first drug that blocks leukocyte-endothelial interactions and many others will arrive soon.

### *What are your strongest points, and what is your weakest?*

I am stubborn and emotional. Those qualities can be strengths and weaknesses, depending on the timing!

### *If you had not become a doctor, what might you have been doing today instead?*

I was in love with literature, so perhaps that is the reason I keep writing... albeit in medicine.

### *What do you do for recreation and fun and what is your favourite dish?*

I love eating...that is why I also run, trying to burn off a few calories. I try to spend as much time as I can with my three little kids (two twin girls, who are 6 years old, and one boy, aged 5 years) and am always running behind them! My favourite dish is pizza....what else, being Italian?!

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