

Matthew Walker Election Statement

It is a great privilege and honour to be a candidate for the position of Chair of ILAE-Europe. I have dedicated my entire professional life to improve the lives of those with epilepsy and to serve the epilepsy community as best I can. I have been secretary of ILAE-Europe since 2013 and championed education, research and advocacy within Europe. If elected, I will endeavour to achieve our common goals of improving epilepsy care and supporting epilepsy research and will continue to serve the aims and ambitions of the European Chapters.

The European region faces enormous challenges, especially with the Covid-19 pandemic, of increasing demands and limited resources. These challenges are made even greater by the disparity in financial resources among the countries of the European WHO-region. Our strength, however, comes from collaboration fostered through clinical and research networks, and education. Whilst significant progress has been made and our destination is clear, there is still far to go. My priorities for the next four years, if I am elected as Chair of ILAE-Europe, encompasses three overlapping domains:

Education and Congresses

The jewels in our crown are the European Congresses on Epileptology (ECE). These have gone from strength to strength and are an outstanding display of European research and clinical excellence. I have been proud to be on the organising committee of the recent ECEs in Prague and Vienna, and I am member of the organising committee of the forthcoming ECE in Geneva. The ECEs are also the main source of income for ILAE-Europe. The postponement of the Congress in Geneva from 2020 to 2022 has had financial implications, but also, more importantly, the opportunity was lost for the 2020 Congress to serve as a forum for individuals and European chapters to contribute to the ILAE-Europe strategy. If elected, I will not only ensure that these voices and opinions are heard but also aim to provide greater communication between individual chapters and ILAE-Europe. The success of these meetings is a tribute to the hard work of ILAE-Europe, the European Chapters, and the European epilepsy community. I will strive to maintain these high standards and to develop further the educational agenda.

There is no doubt that education is a keystone to improved epilepsy care throughout Europe and access to education and educational events is a priority. ILAE-Europe, and the many extraordinary individuals in European epilepsy, have had much success with the development of educational courses beyond our biennial congress. Epilepsy education throughout Europe is a pivotal role of ILAE-Europe, in particular, to encourage young physicians and scientists to join our epilepsy community. This will come not only from meetings, especially aimed at early career physicians and scientists, but also from mentoring and exchanges in Europe. Collaboration with the Young Epilepsy Section is crucial for achieving this. Moreover, a bottom-up, grassroots approach to education is undoubtedly needed, so that the European educational programmes can better represent the needs of the European chapters. Importantly, the continued availability of bursaries, so that all will have the opportunity to share in these educational programmes, is paramount.

Collaboration

The strength of epilepsy care and research throughout Europe is dependent upon partnership and collaboration. As Chair, I will promote transparency and greater liaison with the individual Chapters. However, collaboration has to be viewed on a wider stage. In the last decade, ILAE-Europe has made great strides and achieved major goals through working together with the IBE and ILAE to establish Epilepsy Alliance Europe. Through this there have been major initiatives to improve health care and research in Europe, such as e-epilepsy, EpiCare and ESBACE, and advocacy to the European Union and WHO. However, it is critical that such benefits are available to countries outside of the European Union. As

Chair, I will facilitate this and will also build upon initiatives to create a stable financial structure for these collaborations.

Beyond this, we have benefited considerably from collaborations with other groups, in particular the European Academy of Neurology, and this has greatly enhanced our education agenda and the production of guidelines. If elected, I will build upon the excellent foundation established between our organisations.

Research

Research has been a major component of my working life and I recognise only too well the hurdles that researchers face. Funding has and continues to be an issue. Epilepsy Research in Europe is greatly underfunded compared to other health areas and we need to continue to lobby the European Union and other bodies for sufficient funding to be made available. We need to facilitate collaboration and exchange of ideas across Europe and to contribute to initiatives that achieve this.

Europe now comprises 47 diverse chapters, and recognising and addressing this diversity is a critical role of ILAE-Europe. There are disparities in resources for health and social care and research, and if we are to improve the care of people with epilepsy, then we need to seek ways of improving epilepsy care and research throughout Europe. For the past eight years, I have gained experience during two terms as secretary of ILAE-Europe (formerly the Commission on European Affairs). I am immensely proud to be a part of the European community and, if elected, I will direct all my efforts towards this community.

I kindly ask for your votes and seek your support to become Chair of ILAE-Europe for the 2021 to 2025 term.

With very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Walker'.