



Marko Hawlina



Catherine Creuzot-Garcher

Candidates converge on Paris

Dermot McGrath
in Paris

PARIS in springtime typically evokes images of leisurely strolls along the banks

of the Seine, a glass of Bordeaux wine at a busy café terrace, visits to the Eiffel Tower, shopping on the Champs-Élysées. Unless, of course, you're one of the

300-plus ophthalmology residents who have come to the French capital in order to take part in the European Board of Ophthalmology Diploma (EBOD) examination.

For these candidates, the fun and frolics of the City of Light must be postponed to a later date. Every year in May they come from all corners of the continent to put their ophthalmic knowledge and know-how to the test.

The candidates face a series of written examinations in the form of meticulously prepared multiple-choice questions (MCQs). In addition, the oral part of the examination gives them the opportunity to explain how they would apply theoretical learning to real-life clinical situations.

All examinations generate some measure of stress and strain for the candidates who have to take them, and the EBOD examination is no exception. But the pressure of passing the exam is only part of the story, as becomes clear when the candidates explain their motivation for sitting the examination.

"I would recommend this exam to both residents and those who are practising ophthalmology as specialists"

Fersat Muhacir, Turkish candidate

"I wanted to have an accreditation that is recognised across Europe," said Peykan Turkuoglu, one of the five Turkish candidates who sat the EBOD examination this year. "It was an interesting and enjoyable experience and it was a great pleasure to take part in the examination with candidates from other European countries. I would strongly recommend all my colleagues in ophthalmology to take this examination in the future," he said.



Beata Mazur, FEBO (Belgium), wins the Best Overall EBOD

Another Turkish candidate, Fersat Muhacir, told *EuroTimes* that there are some compelling reasons for sitting the EBOD examination.

"I am a practising ophthalmologist who qualified over 12 years ago. I really needed a motivating factor to both refresh my knowledge in ophthalmology and bring me up to date in all aspects of my profession. The EBOD exam was the best way for me to achieve this goal," he said.

Dr Muhacir said that while he found the examination tough but fair, he added that it was a very memorable experience that he would heartily recommend to his colleagues.

"Participating in such a well-organised diploma exam with my colleagues from all over Europe for the common goal of achieving this qualification was a unique experience. I would recommend this exam to both residents and those who are practising ophthalmology as specialists. It really is one of the best ways to gauge your knowledge according to the highest standards of ophthalmology in Europe," he said.

For a growing number of ophthalmology residents across Europe, the EBOD examination has become an obligatory or strongly recommended step in the procedure to become recognised ophthalmic specialists in their own country.

"It is a tradition for all the ophthalmology residents in Slovenia to take this examination," explained Uladimir Butkevich, who came second in both the MCQs and Overall EBOD category awards this year. "It is not

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to try to earn the coveted EBO Diploma

obligatory but we are strongly encouraged to take it and most residents do come to Paris to take the EBOD examination," he said.

Although such an element of gentle persuasion on the part of national societies obviously plays a role in motivating many candidates to take the EBOD examination, Uladzimir believes that all candidates will still gain something from the experience.

"My principal aim was to have a diploma in Belgium, because it is an obligatory step for all the ophthalmology residents in Belgium to pass the EBOD examination"

Beata Mazur

"I didn't expect to do so well. I'm a resident still and have a programme of residency until the end of this year. It was a lot of hard work and there was quite a high level of stress involved, especially for the MCQs because you never know what is going to come up. However, it was a rewarding experience and gives us an opportunity to meet and discuss with residents from other countries," he said.

While all candidates who passed the examination were understandably relieved and proud to have earned their respective diplomas, there was one candidate in particular for whom this year's EBOD examination marked the culmination of a

long personal and professional journey.

Beata Mazur, a Polish-born national who now lives in Belgium, received a special certificate and an exchange grant of €1000 for Best Overall EBOD.

Beata said that she was thrilled and surprised to have performed so well in the examinations.

"I am very happy and surprised to have done so well. It was a lot of hard work. I found the EBOD examination harder than the national Belgian examination but I have had a lot of support from those around me to get me to this point," she said.

Having initially studied medicine in Poland, Beata was obliged to start from scratch when she and her husband decided to move to Belgium.

"It was very difficult and especially when you are trying to do all this in a language [French] that is not your native one," she said. She singled out the support of her friend Nacima Kisma, who also passed the EBOD exam this year, as being instrumental in helping her reach her goal.

"My principal aim was to have a diploma in Belgium, because it is an obligatory step for all the ophthalmology residents in Belgium to pass the EBOD examination. But I also think it is important to have a European recognition and that is what this EBO Diploma and award means for me, especially as a Polish national who has

come to work and live in Belgium," she said.

The other main prize-winner this year was Martina Möglich from Germany who

received the 2009 Alan Ridgway Award for best MCQs result, in addition to a €1000 exchange grant.



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Marko Hawlina, president EBO; Uladzimir Butkevich, FEBO (Slovenia); Beata Mazur, FEBO (Belgium); Martina Möglich (Germany); Christoph Tappeiner (Switzerland); and Catherine Creuzot-Garcher MD, PhD, FEBO, vice-president of EBO and chairman of the Education Committee

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