

KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

THROUGH THE CONFERENCE EUROHEARTCARE 2017

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Abstract

Type of meeting: The EuroHeartCare (EHC) 2017 conference is a healthcare conference which was held between the 18th and 20th of May in 2017. The conference focused on cardiovascular heart care.

Size of meeting: 367 delegates from over 40 countries attended the conference of which 32 delegates were from Jönköping, and another 100 delegates came from other parts of Sweden.

Geographical location of meeting: Jönköping, Sweden.

Industry sector: The conference was relevant to the healthcare sector and focused on cardiovascular healthcare.

Methodological approach: Primary and secondary sources were utilised, data was obtained through both face-to-face and online interviews, as well as through observations at the conference, and news/media releases.

Key benefits realised: This study outlines the knowledge sharing and knowledge gains for delegates attending the conference.

Main beneficiaries: Delegates, i.e. PhD students, nurses, university professors & researchers, Organisations, i.e. hospitals, research institutions, administration & government

Relevance/implications/lessons learnt: This study showcases that conferences are events where delegates gain and share knowledge, network, develop professionally, and get personal recognition.

After the conference, delegates typically share the knowledge they gained with their colleagues at the workplace through presentations and/or scheduled meetings. This knowledge sharing has the potential to improve organisations and lead to outcomes that affect a wide-range of people.

Future research: Since this study focuses on the early stages of non-economic effects, future research should be directed towards longer-term outcomes. By doing this, one would be able to comment on; a) the professional development of a delegate who attended the conference, and b) collaborations that took effect after the conference, both on an organisational and individual level.

Keywords: Knowledge gains, knowledge shared, networks, non-economic effects, collaborations

1 Introduction

1.1 Study Background

Meetings, conferences and business events strengthen communities that share a joint interest by engaging in collaborative connections or business ideas with each other (Wenger and Snyder, 2000). The purpose and potential outcomes of conferences are important to be determined early in the planning process. Otherwise, why should a university, hospital department, or city host a conference, which requires the allocation of limited human and monetary resources? Several studies have strived to answer this question by identifying, documenting, and measuring the economic impacts of conferences (Jones and Li, 2015; Hanly, 2012; Kim et al., 2003). These studies often include multiplier effects resulting from the staging of a conference that stimulate growth within regional or national economies. Even if these studies have had shortcomings in regards to comparability between countries and general applicability (Lee and Back, 2005; Hughes, 1988) most results have shown substantial direct economic impact at least on the local/national economy of the host destinations (Jones and Li, 2015; Kim et al., 2003; Grado et al., 1997).

In recent years however, the request for documentation and proof of other, less-tangible and longer-term effects of conferences has been given more importance by the Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC). The article “Beyond Tourism Benefits” (BTB) has been one of the first studies of its kind to investigate exactly this (Edwards et al., 2011). While the direct economic effects are relatively easy to measure and communicate using traditional methods, there is no standardized way to measure and reveal how a conference influenced the local research community, improved careers or enhanced the brand value of the local organiser.

This case study, the European conference EuroHeartCare 2017 in Jönköping, Sweden has been undertaken to contribute to the JMIC’s case study project to assist in building the body of evidence for BTB outcomes arising from conferences.

1.2 About EuroHeartCare 2017

EuroHeartCare is the annual meeting of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) Council on Cardiovascular Nursing and Allied Professions (CCNAP). It aims to support healthcare professionals in delivering the best care possible to patients with cardiovascular disease. People from over 40 countries around the globe were present at the conference, with most attendees coming from Europe. The 2017 edition was hosted by Jönköping University and took place between the 18th and 20th of May at the Culture Hall Spira in Jönköping. The EuroHeartCare conference is one of the most important platforms for driving research publications, exchange of ideas, and forming and deepening collaborations within the field of cardiovascular nursing in Europe.

1.3 Purpose of Study

The aim of the study is to understand delegates' expectations prior to attending the conference and to identify the short-term outcomes experienced by delegates and organisations.

2 Methodology

2.1 Data Sources

Both primary and secondary data have been used for this study. Primary data was collected by conducting 15 face-to-face and online (Skype and email) semi-structured interviews with delegates, conference organisers, and high-level decision makers at both Jönköping University and Jönköping municipality prior, during and after the conference (see appendix). In addition to the interviews, information was collected through news and media releases (Destination Jönköping, 2017; Manipal College of Pharmaceutical Sciences, 2017; EuroHeartCare, 2017)

2.2 *Data Analysis*

The data collected was analysed using an inductive approach (Thomas, 2006). All face-to-face and online interviews were recorded, and later transcribed. The text was analysed for key words and phrases, and a final set of common categories were highlighted from the process. The paper is divided into two main sections; pre and during conference findings, and post conference findings. The pre- and during conference findings highlight the generic and specific reasons why delegates attended EHC 2017, whilst the post-conference findings focus on the outcomes for various stakeholders, namely delegates and organisations.

2.3 *Data Limitations*

Interviews were not carried out with the same set of people pre, during and post conference due to the relatively short period of time allocated for data collection and the unavailability of a few individuals. This would have been ideal, as it would have been easier to make a direct comparison between expectations and outcomes from EHC 2017. Moreover, the case study makes use of interviews as the only source of primary data. Future studies could expand on the primary data collection given the appropriate tools and resources.

3 **Pre/During Conference Analysis**

3.1 *Expectations of delegates for attending the conference*

3.1.1 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing is when individuals mutually exchange their knowledge and jointly create new knowledge (Van den Hooff and De Ridder, 2004). This means that knowledge sharing consists of both giving and receiving knowledge (de Vries et al., 2006) and is a two-way process of knowledge formation between the sender and receiver of information.

From the interviews carried out, we find that many delegates attend conferences with the intention of sharing the knowledge gained at the conference with their colleagues back at the workplace. However, this is not the only type of knowledge sharing that delegates take part in. The delegates at the conference take the time to discuss common areas of interest both in formal and informal settings. This kind of interaction could have various consequences, some of which will be discussed later, though when it comes to knowledge sharing, the main goal is to learn from each other (Adler and Kwon, 2002)

Benefits of attending the conference include the knowledge you get together, and get to share with colleagues, which means everyone in the health center. – Lena, Delegate & Nurse

One of the expected benefits of attending the conference is:

the knowledge that the attendees can take back to their institutions (hospitals for clinical nurses and neuro specialists), and also of course we hope that people take knowledge back to the universities, perhaps to a lesser extent to develop practices, and share ideas, and to build on known knowledge. – Tina, Presenter at EHC 2017 & CCNAP member

3.1.2 Knowledge Gains

When knowledge is passed on from one person to another without the receiver contributing towards the exchange, then the receiver is gaining knowledge within a specific field or subject. This one-way communication knowledge gain has been identified as an important reason to why delegates attend conferences. The delegates would like to sit down and listen to speakers, and to take part in the various scientific programmes (symposia and workshops). By doing this, delegates improve their skills and understanding of the subject being discussed. “I will listen to workshops and pay special attention to the English medical terms used by the speakers, which is very important to me right now when writing papers” (Louise, Delegate & PhD student).

Furthermore, Louise claimed that one of the advantages of attending the conference was having the latest information all in one place for certain topics in the healthcare sector: “we get to hear about

the latest research, gathered in one place, in 3 days". This helps delegates in keeping up-to-date with the latest revelations in the healthcare sector, where many speakers highlighted and debated what they thought was important.

My view is that conferences are important because you get to know the latest findings on certain topics. I think it would be awful if patients had to ask me a question and I wouldn't know how to answer. The patients could ask about the latest findings in atrial fibrillation, and if they had to do so, I would like to be up to date and give them information about it. – Lena, Delegate & Nurse

3.1.3 Professional Development

The goal for delegates when sharing and gaining knowledge is to enhance their skills and become better professionals at their place of work. The EuroHeartCare conference provided many opportunities for delegates to get involved and learn something new. The various symposia and workshops gave a practical element to the conference, where nurses and other healthcare professionals were able to simulate real life scenarios when treating patients. "I think other individuals here also feel that one chooses what one is interested in listening to, which might be of benefit to what one does due to what one works with" (Petra, Delegate & Nurse). The conference was also well-suited to students and researchers who have ideas for new potential papers, with eight abstract based sessions organised (EuroHeartCare, 2017).

3.1.4 Networking

When delegates who share common interests are gathered within the same venue, opportunity arises to maintain and create new contacts. There were delegates that formally arranged to meet up with each other at a certain time and place, whilst others met up during an event at the conference and befriended each other as the conference progressed. It is important to note that both formal and informal interactions were important for delegates. Formal interactions usually entailed a pre-determined agenda which both parties had agreed to discuss, whilst informal interactions were often held during breaks between one workshop and another, or at a restaurant after the day's

activities. Informal interactions provided the opportunity to discuss personal matters, which typically raise the probability of future collaboration (Jeong, Choi and Kim, 2014).

We have a lot of discussions during the breaks, both formal and informal, and I think a lot of knowledge exchanges happen during these discussions. This conference allows you the time to sit down in a relaxed setting and just chat with other delegates. We have the informal events such as the opening ceremony and cocktail party, which is a good opportunity for the delegates to discuss their research in a relaxed setting. – Tina, Presenter at EHC 2017 & CCNAP member

I will also get the opportunity to talk to the attendees and exhibitors about my research area in English. Building networks in my field is something that I aim to do whilst talking about my research area. – Louise, Delegate & PhD student

The EuroHeartCare conference provides me with an opportunity to create new international connections and collaborate with a wider range of people from diverse background with professional expertise in cardiology. – Sangeetha, Delegate & Speaker

3.1.5 Personal Recognition

Another reason for delegates to attend this conference was the personal recognition that they would be gaining by attending the event. This was especially the case for delegates that were either speakers at one of the events, discussion leaders, chairpersons, judges of scientific abstracts, or any other role that involved a certain degree of authority. For example, Sangeetha presented a paper on “Assessing the effect of gender in the management of Atrial fibrillation” and won the ‘Top Scored poster’ for her work at the end of the congress.

Having bagged the top scored poster award was indeed an honour to my entire team. This appreciation has not just boosted me to work even harder but has also been an impetus for my peer mates working towards a quality research affecting patient population – Sangeetha, Speaker & PhD student

Moreover, delegates attending the event got the chance to discuss their ideas and projects between themselves, which is another form of recognition.

3.2 *Specific Delegate reasons for attending EHC conference*

3.2.1 PhD students

PhD students had the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills needed to write a scientific article. Editors of both American and European cardiovascular nursing journals were present at the conference. They took the time to discuss certain topics of interest in workshops and seminars. This meant that PhD students had the opportunity to listen to the latest findings in a medical area that could clarify their own research contribution.

We will have a workshop on how to write a scientific article, because quite a lot of participants will be PhD students working within this discipline. So, we will also have one workshop, where we will have editors from American and European cardiovascular nursing journals and they will act as mentors, where students can discuss what is important when writing or publishing a scientific article. – Jan, Local organiser & Senior professor

3.2.2 Nurses

New guidelines, which focus on how a nurse should treat their patients, and new treatments, such as new ways of using existing equipment or new equipment being introduced, present nurses with opportunities to learn new skills and gain knowledge. Selected speakers and event discussants shared their knowledge with nurses through presentations and lectures. Cardiopulmonary resuscitations (CPR) and electrocardiograms (ECGs) are two of the many workshops where nurses got the chance to practice and enhance their skills.

We will invite people from all over the world to share their competence with nurses. Attendees will also have the opportunity to gain new knowledge and skills from the presentations, lectures and workshops organised. When it comes to the practice of skills, nurses will have workshops on CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and ECGs (electrocardiograms). – Jan, Local organiser & Senior professor

3.2.3 Senior Professors

Senior professors knew that they would be meeting with other professors at EHC 2017. Therefore, the conference provided senior professors with a chance to network amongst themselves.

From my own experience at many similar conferences such as EHC 2017, I realised that one of the most important features of a conference is the opportunity to meet and

discuss with other researchers in the same field of study. I am looking forward to meet (and have already planned some meetings) with colleagues from other universities, both national and international. – Jan, Local organiser & Senior professor

3.2.4 Swedish delegates

Proximity to the conference, which was held in Jönköping, Sweden means that it was easier and more convenient for Swedish delegates to be present at the conference. When Louise, PhD student and Swedish delegate, was asked what attracted her to EHC 2017 she replied, “The proximity to begin with, but more importantly we hear about the latest research, gathered in one place in 3 days”. Jan (Local organiser & Senior professor) also viewed proximity as a major drawcard: “it is a great opportunity for those working in this region to attend a conference that is quite close to home with no big distances of travel required.”

4 Post-conference analysis for delegates

4.1 *The short-term outcomes after the conference*

4.1.1 Formation of an event

A key outcome from EHC 2017 was the setting up of a project, which is ongoing, where the main aim is to identify patients with atrial fibrillation (irregular heartbeats). The conference served as a reminder and gave further information on patients living with the condition. Lena (Nurse) and her colleagues set up a one-day event where they invited nurses from ‘Bra Liv Health Centres’ (a group of health centres within the Jönköping region) to inform these nurses about the condition atrial fibrillation, along with the new information acquired at the conference.

On the 9th of November we will invite nurses from BRA LIV health care centres and pass on the knowledge we learnt at the conference about atrial fibrillation. – Lena, Delegate & Nurse

4.1.2 Professional Development

From the interviews carried out after the conference, career enhancement has been confirmed by the delegates. Through the various workshops and events at the conference delegates felt that they were able to apply what they learnt at the conference to their place of work. Guidelines presented at the conference that aim to assist nurses in treating patients have been considered useful when on the job. Whilst for researchers, the diverse backgrounds of healthcare professionals present at the conference assisted in the expansion of knowledge within certain areas of research.

The EuroHeartCare 2017 conference was the best way to connect with scientists working in different spectrums of cardiovascular sciences and this has helped me widen my horizon of clinical research and practice. – Sangeetha, Speaker & PhD student

The EHC conference has strengthened my professional capabilities and made me aware of not stagnating with old findings and old ways of working, but to rather continuously improve and develop myself as a cardiac nurse. – Petra, Nurse & Delegate

I have been trying to work in line with the guidelines and successful research that was presented at the conference. The main aim of this is to better patient treatment. – Petra, Nurse & Delegate

4.1.3 Knowledge Gains

The conference provided the delegates with the latest research within the cardiovascular field, which proved to be of importance to both nurses and academics alike. Both types of professionals claimed that they felt more up-to-date with regards to cardiovascular healthcare by listening and participating in the events scheduled at the conference.

The symposia delivered by several excellent scientists and researchers have demonstrated the need for adopting standard methodologies for high quality research and potential interventions to be implemented by non-physician healthcare providers to improve cardiovascular care. – Sangeetha, Speaker & PhD student

I feel that I have gained something from the conference, particularly what topics are being discussed in Europe on cardiovascular healthcare, especially due to the international profile of the delegates at the event. – Lena, Delegate & Nurse

4.1.4 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing has been identified as a clear outcome of EHC 2017. There was both knowledge sharing during and after the conference. During the conference, knowledge sharing took place between one delegate and another. The intention here was to learn from each other and talk about each other's work and experience. After the conference, the knowledge gained by delegates was shared with colleagues back at the workplace. Here, the organisations' aim was to expand the benefits gained by the individuals who attended the conference to more employees.

Whenever attending a conference the people present have always shared what they learnt with their colleagues back at the health care center. – Lena, Delegate & Nurse

With a background in clinical pharmacy and research, and special interests in preventive cardiology, I have had the opportunity to interact with several delegates who shared the common interests and it was quite inspiring to learn about their contribution in this field. – Sangeetha, Speaker & PhD student

I have had the possibility to present what was learnt at the conference with my colleagues at the health center by creating a Powerpoint presentation with what I thought were the main takeaways from the event. – Petra, Delegate & Nurse

4.1.5 Networking

EHC 2017 was a great opportunity for people who share common interests to meet and discuss their projects and form collaborations. It has been noted that forming collaborations and mingling with people at the event really depends on individuals' openness to take the chance and present themselves and their ideas to other people.

As a young researcher, I have been very fortunate to connect with some of the best experts in the area who not only helped me understand my potentials and possible career options to explore but also turned out to be great mentors who still continue to guide me with my research and publications. Several interesting discussions have also paved way to collaborate with other institutions and for a multicentric study. – Sangeetha, Speaker & PhD student

It's up to the delegates to take the opportunity and not only listen to the presentations but also discuss with people who are present at the conference. – Jan, Local organiser & Senior professor

5 Other Beneficiaries

5.1 Jönköping University (JU)

The EHC conference provided a range of benefits to JU and its employees and students:

PhD students at the university had the opportunity to meet both foreign and local professors. This meant that they had the opportunity to make contact with professors who could possibly help them in their field of work. Contacts with foreign professors make it easier for local PhD students to go on exchange if interested, as now they would have a reference when applying to the university in question.

I think that one of the greatest opportunities for PHD students during EHC 2017, was to get the chance to meet researchers that you have read about in your studies..... also if a student would like to go on an international exchange programme, it would be much easier to do so if the student has a contact at a university abroad – Jan, Local organiser & Senior professor

There were workshops such as “publishing your articles with impact and influence” which were aimed at identifying the main tools and skills needed in order for PhD students to publish high quality articles in journals. These workshops could support PhD students’ publishing endeavours.

We had a workshop called “publishing your articles with impact and influence”, which was mainly directed towards PHD students, and those who attended that workshop had of course great interest in getting more knowledge on what makes a good article. – Jan, Local organiser & Senior professor

5.2 Healthcare Centres

Fifty-four per cent of all delegates at the conference were nurse practitioners (EHC, 2017). These nurses participated in the various events at the conference, gained knowledge, discussed ideas with other delegates, and returned to their healthcare centre work places, which include both hospitals and clinics. Petra and Lena (who are both nurses) stated that the knowledge gained from the conference was shared with their colleagues through various channels. This means that the benefits of attending the conference were passed on to other nurses at the health centre that did not attend

the conference. Hence, the conference has contributed to an improved environment at the health care centres.

When one attends a conference and shares knowledge, the people at the health care center get onboard which creates a feeling of togetherness. – Petra, Delegate & Nurse

5.3 *CESAR Group*

The CESAR group is a group of researchers who work toward collaboration and exchange in Swedish cardiovascular academic research. This group consists of researchers that work at different universities across Sweden, mainly from Jönköping, Kalmar, Linköping, and Nörrköping. EHC 2017 was an opportunity for the CESAR group to collaborate and exchange information on cardiovascular research.

It would have been impossible to have this conference in Jönköping without the help from CESAR group. We have been a well-functioning research group for many years and have published a lot of research together. This conference was a perfect opportunity to manifest that. We had a CESAR meeting just before the conference started and during the meeting we had a lot of discussions, both within the group, but also with other research networks. One example is the three day “writing seminar” we had at Linköping University that took place after the conference was over with a research group from University of Kentucky, US. – Jan, Local organiser and Senior professor

5.4 *Destination research community*

Scandinavia is known to be research orientated when it comes to cardiovascular health care. The conference reflected the research that was going on within the area, with many high quality researchers from all over Sweden attending, and strengthened destination researchers’ level of expertise.

The programme that we’ve developed here is more along the lines of research, as delegates in Sweden are more interested in this line of work. Whereas, two years ago, when we were in Southern Europe, in Croatia, the programme was very much about the basic elements of nursing and similar areas, so the programme is adapted according to the country we host it in. – Damian, EHC 2017 organiser & CCNAP member

6 **Discussion**

From our study we propose a three-stage knowledge transmission process (Figure 1) which is derived from pre- and post-conference data. It is important to note that the outcomes realised in

stage 3 are short term which is due to the relatively short post-conference time frame analysed, therefore one would expect more organisational benefits if the time frame analysed were to be longer. We believe that future studies on longer-term organisational benefits can add value to both our study and existing ones within the meeting and business event literature.

6.1 From Expectations to Outcomes

Common expectations and outcomes for delegates were both knowledge sharing and knowledge gaining. Most delegates attending the conference represented an organisation, such as a healthcare centre or university. These delegates are usually sent to conferences on behalf of organisations to learn something new and bring back new information. The knowledge brought back, is expected to be shared with the rest of staff that work on the same or similar projects. Figure 1 presents the process of knowledge transmission, from the delegates at the conference to the people at their respective organisations.

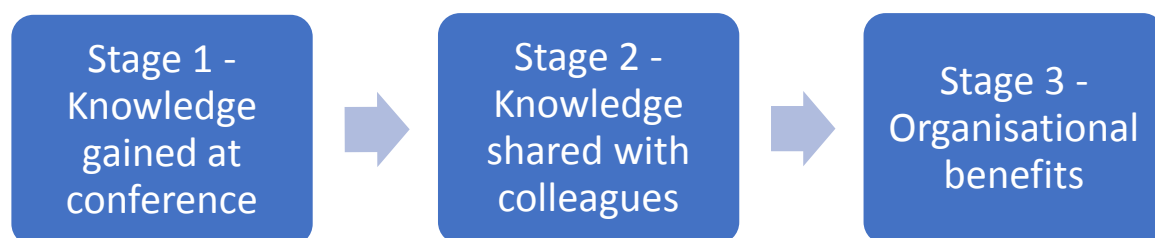


Figure 1 - Process of knowledge transmission

Stage 1 – Knowledge gained at the conference

Delegates gained knowledge through; symposia, the abstract based programme, practical workshops, four special events (inaugural session, networking reception, CCNAP general assembly, closing ceremony), keynote speeches and discussions between themselves. (EHC, 2017). The knowledge gained occurred both by one-way communication events, those events which required

the delegates to sit down and listen, such as presentations, and two-way communication exchanges such as formal and informal conversations between delegates.

Stage 2 – Knowledge shared with colleagues

After the conference ended delegates returned to their respective organisations, and shared what they learnt with their colleagues through presentations and scheduled meetings. For example, Lena and Petra (both nurses) compiled a short document highlighting key takeaways from the conference, and they presented a summary at a workplace meeting.

Stage 3 – Outcomes for organisations

The last stage in this process results in the organisation being better informed in specific areas related to topics discussed at EHC. This could lead to various outcomes, such as the formation of a project, which was discussed earlier, organised by Petra and Lena, or a rise in interest and increased academic writing in areas related to cardiovascular healthcare. These are two outcomes experienced for organisations, however the possibility of more is likely but has not been captured through our study.

We know that before and during the conference, a lot of writing is going on since students and professors need to write an abstract and send it in (at the conference). In fact, a lot of research groups gather and discuss what kind of research is ready to publish, and how scientific papers can be collected within a common framework, so we always have a little surge in paper publication after a conference. – Jan, Local organiser & Senior professor

7 Conclusions

This study contributes to the literature on non-economic benefits of conferences by analysing the short-term benefits realised from the conference EuroHeartCare 2017, held in Jönköping. The study focuses on delegate benefits realised at the conference, but also discusses the benefits realised for the organisations.

From the interviews carried out, we find that knowledge gains and knowledge sharing are two important benefits that made the EHC 2017 conference worth its value. For delegates, predominantly nurses and university professionals, gaining knowledge in the healthcare sector meant that they felt more competent in their profession with many exclaiming that they expect this conference to positively affect their professional development. Employees at organisations, such as healthcare centres, want to attend conferences so that they can listen to the latest research in the industry, and later share this knowledge with their colleagues.

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Appendix

Interview details

Time Period of Interview in relation to EHC	Interviewee	Role of Interviewee in relation to EHC	Affiliation
Pre-Conference	Louise Rundqvist	Delegate	Lecturer and PHD student at JU
	Jan Mårtensson	Head of Local Organizing Committee	Chairman of research council at JU
During Conference	Tina Brigitte Hansen	Presenter at the conference	Vice-Chairperson for Council on Cardiovascular Nursing and Allied Professionals (CCNAP)
	Sangeetha Iyer	Presenter and winner of "Top Scored Poster"	PhD student at Manipal College of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Bangalore
	Petra Falk Hancic	Delegate	District nurse at a primary care centre in Jönköping
	Lena Heinebäck	Delegate	District nurse at a primary care centre in Jönköping
	Damian Basto	Conference organizer at EuroHeartCare	European Society of Cardiology (ESC)
Post-Conference	Sofie Sääf	-	Communication Strategist at JU
	Sangeetha Iyer	Presenter and winner of "Top Scored Poster" / Delegate	PhD student at Manipal College of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Bangalore
	Petra Falk Hancic	Delegate	District nurse at a primary care centre in Jönköping
	Lena Heinebäck	Delegate	District nurse at a primary care centre in Jönköping
	Jan Mårtensson	Head of Local Organizing Committee	Chairman of research council at JU
	Damian Basto	Conference organizer at EuroHeartCare	European Society of Cardiology (ESC)
	Ann-Marie Nilsson	Representative Jönköping Municipality	Chairwoman at Jönköping City Council
	Agneta Jansmyr	Representative Jönköping County	Region Director of Jönköping County