

Report of Tarragona Progress Meeting

The second progress meeting was held in Tarragona, Spain and the EARNEST consortium greatly appreciated the warm hospitality of Professor Ricardo Closa and his team from University Rovira i Virgili. Tarragona is a picturesque town with extensive Roman ruins on the coast south of Barcelona and the group enjoyed staying on the seafront with views over the remains of an amphitheatre and hippodrome. The meeting also did its bit for European cultural integration with the hotel staff getting used to providing a quick lunch at 12.30 and everybody else getting used to having a relaxed dinner at 10pm!

Though the bulk of the time was taken up with meetings of the different themes, it also provided an opportunity for the coordination team to introduce the internal website and encourage everybody to use it as their main method of communication. The forum facility in each theme section allows the whole group to discuss issues without having to send out and keep lots of different emails. Another facility allows files to be uploaded and shared with everybody in the consortium. Members were encouraged to place on the internal website copies of their presentations.

The theme meetings enabled the members of each theme to become more familiar with the other projects in their theme and so identify common approaches and opportunities. During Theme 1 discussions, members discussed sharing databases, pooling analyses on outcomes such as blood pressure and harmonising methodologies. They identified a need for greater integration with Theme 4. The Theme 2 discussions focussed on progress on enrolment in the different cohorts and recognised the need for more collaboration with Theme 3. The discussions in the Theme 3 meetings were primarily about standardising protocols and technologies. They also recognised the need for deeper integration with other themes. Theme 4 agreed data collection and logging procedures while Theme 6 agreed the next steps for the two clinical trials they will be carrying out.

A common desire arising from each of the individual theme sessions was for greater integration between the themes and more opportunity to explore common interests. It was agreed that more time would be allocated to this at the next General Assembly meeting in Brussels.