

ENDOCRINOLOGY IN ROMANIA - CURRENT STATE AND PERSPECTIVES



Interview with, Assoc. Prof. Adina Mariana GHEMIGIAN, MD, PhD, First Vice President of the Association of Clinical Endocrinology in Romania (AECR)

Managerial experience

- Manager of the „C.I. Parhon ” National Institute of Endocrinology: the management and coordination of the entire administrative, medical and research activity of the Institute
- Medical manager of the „C.I. Parhon” National Institute of Endocrinology: leading and coordinating the medical activity
- Research and development manager of the „C.I. Parhon” National Institute of Endocrinology: leading and coordinating the research activity.

Education and training

1994, primary care endocrinologist

1999, doctor of medicine, endocrinology; PhD thesis title: "Etiopathogenic, pathophysiological and therapeutic considerations in polycystic ovary syndrome"

In-depth study program:

1. Certificate of clinical densitometry, diagnosis and management of osteoporosis, 2010, 2015
2. Master in management of public health and health services organized by the Public Health and Management Department of "Carol Davila" University of Medicine and Pharmacy Bucharest, in 2007
3. Overspecialization in endocrine-metabolic bone pathology, 2005
4. Competence in endocrine ultrasound, 2004
5. Postgraduate course in health management organized by the Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies, with a duration of 1 year

2015-present, Associate Professor in nutrition, dietetics and endocrinology discipline, Faculty of Midwives and Nursing of "Carol Davila" University of Medicine and Pharmacy Bucharest.

Membership of commissions, medical and scientific societies

- CNAS Commission for the Drug Treatment of Acromegaly and Neuroendocrine Tumors: president of the

Commission between 2010 and 2012, member of the Commission (2012-March 2017);

- Endocrinology Commission of the Ministry of Health, member (2012-2016);
- General Council of the Bucharest College of Physicians, member (2015-2019);
- member of the Romanian Society of Endocrinology since 1986;
- member of the Romanian Association of Clinical Endocrinology since 2004;
- member of the Romanian Society of Endocrinological Gynecology since 2013;
- member of the Romanian Society of Chronobiology since 2013;
- member of the European Society of Endocrinology (ESE) since 2006;
- member of AACE (American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists) since 2005;
- member of the NOF (National Osteoporosis Foundation) since 2013.

Reporter: *Dear Mrs. Adina Ghemigian, you have an academic activity as associate professor, you are a renowned endocrinologist with prestigious achievements in the field and currently hold the position of first vice-president in the management team of the Association of Clinical Endocrinology in Romania (AECR).*

- Please describe briefly the role of this association in the whole health sector in Romania (purpose, objectives, mission).

AMG: AECR is one of the four companies operating in the field of endocrinology and related specialties in Romania, with a history of over 15 years. It was founded under the auspices of Professor Constantin Dumitrache, one of the most important personalities in the Romanian medical field in the last 20 years, in this case in the field of endocrinology. He is currently the Honorary President of the AECR. The association aims to continue the tradition of the Romanian school of endocrinology regarding the promotion of clinical aspects in the wide and captivating field of endocrinology, emphasizing aspects specific to our country, but also the rallying to international standards. Also in the spirit of AECR, we promote collegiality and maintaining a networking system between colleagues from various Romanian cities, both for collaboration on solving complex medical cases and in maintaining a system for promoting specialized medical information during the organized scientific events.

- What are the main areas of activity of this company?

AMG: The field of activity of the AECR, as it results from the name, is endocrinology, as well as the specialties with whose professionals endocrinologists often collaborate in daily practice: endocrine surgery, imaging, thyroid, anatomopathology, nuclear medicine, neurosurgery, ENT, cardiology, ophthalmology, gynecology, oncology, laboratory medicine etc.

An important link in the management of the patient with endocrine diseases is the family doctor, both for guidance in diagnosis and for monitoring the disease. This is also the reason why the Institute, in partnership with the PARTNET Association, implemented, between December 2017 and June 2021, a POCU project coordinated by me as project manager, in which 285 doctors were trained, mostly doctors of family and 670 nurses across the country.

R: Over time you have been constantly involved in the management of this company. You have also been in charge of leading health units in the field of endocrinology (as manager of "C. I. Parhon" National Institute of Endocrinology) and you have an enviable professional training, expertise and experience, both in the specific field and of health management.

- What do you think could be considered landmarks in the development of the field of endocrinology in Romania? What is the place of the Parhon Institute in this picture?

AMG: The "C.I. Parhon" National Institute of Endocrinology is the only complete tertiary center dedicated to endocrinological pathology in Romania and among the few with this type of profile in Southeast Europe. The institute was and is a landmark in the Romanian medical landscape. At present, it continues to provide specialized medical care, being a unit equipped with beds and an outpatient clinic. The institute is unique in the country through the department of endocrine pediatrics, the department of endocrine surgery and the department of isotopic therapy, where patients with differentiated thyroid cancer and those with hyperthyroidism are treated with radioactive iodine. High-performance medical equipment ensures high quality medical care.

The activity of healthcare is harmoniously combined with that of education through the activity of teachers supported by European standards for the training of students, residents and nurses in the field of endocrinology.

Last but not least, research funded by European funds is just as important.

Regarding the period of the last two years, it can be stated that the pandemic adaptation has been high, ensuring the continuation of the specialized assistance also in these epidemiological conditions. The pandemic adaptation has been high, including the provision of specialized assistance in these epidemiological conditions. The current management team of the Institute organized a department dedicated to COVID-19 positive patients and a vaccination center.

- How would you assess the current organization and operation of the units in which medical services are provided for patients with endocrine disorders?

AMG: At the national level, there are different conditions for the provision of medical care in the field of endocrinology, from bed units, in this case in multidisciplinary hospitals, to outpatient clinics, in state medical units, respectively in the private sector. Their distribution differs with the geographical area, in the cities that are university centers there is a higher density of endocrinologists, as expected. In essence, endocrine practice par excellence requires laboratory investigations and imaging investigations (ultrasound, CT, MRI, DXA etc.).

- What are the weak points and what would be the strengths of the endocrinology field in Romania?

AMG: Weakness: international promotion.

Strong point: continuing a tradition. Our institute is the first endocrinology institute in the world, founded by Prof. C.I. Parhon in 1946, who was also the author of the first treatise on endocrinology in the world with Dr. M. Goldstein. The first endocrinology department in the world was founded in 1933 by Prof. C.I. Parhon.

- How can the professional framework provided by your association support the development of this field?

AMG: By accessing information, promoting scientific events and cultivating a networking system between endocrinologists and related specialties.

R: Distinguished Mrs. Ghemigian, you have a vast professional experience, as a doctor, in the health unit where you work, and endocrinology is the specialty that has brought you a lot of satisfaction.

- How has the provision of care for the patient with endocrine disorders changed in recent decades?

AMG: Change is part of us, so it is part of medical practice and its upward evolution towards alignment with international standards. Some aspects have gradually changed with the changes in the entire Romanian society, others forced by circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In the last two years, telemedicine has been developed as an alternative for providing specialized medical care in epidemiological conditions that have required distancing and isolation.

- To what extent have there been changes in disease patterns, in the diagnosis and therapeutic approach of the patient with endocrine disorders?

AMG: The promotion of international guidelines has been reflected both at the national level and at the level →

of our institute through the implemented diagnostic and treatment protocols. Endocrine diseases have not changed, but the severity of the patients who come to us has increased significantly in the last two years.

- To what extent can be applied your achievements in the Romanian context as well? In this specific field, is the Romanian patient treated the same as patients from other countries?

AMG: Most endocrine disorders are covered nationwide. International collaborations for specific cases are a common practice in modern society.

R: *Following the tradition of the last years, one of the most recent activities of the company is the organization within the XV Congress of AECR 2021 "AECR Symposium – The Pandemic Experience".*

- What is the magnitude of this event and how do you see it in the current pandemic context??

AMG: To date, the AECR has organized 14 congresses in the traditional, pre-pandemic manner. At the end of this year, we launched a site with permanent activity, aecr.ro, which aims to be an interface for promoting scientific events / manifestations, but also a center of educational resources for endocrinologists and other specialties. AECR is authorized by the CMR to organize EMC credited events.

- What topics were addressed and what would be the conclusions drawn after the presentation of the works?

AMG: The 15th AECR Congress is an exclusively online event and, in new times, new approaches: this congress consists of three online symposia with different data to ensure the participation of as many doctors as possible for whom the interruption of professional activity 2-3 consecutive days it would be difficult to achieve. One of our

goals is the active participation of colleagues, with questions and discussions at the end of each presentation. This first "Pandemic Symposium" took place in December and brought to the fore topics of major interest in the field of medical practice in the last 2 years, namely aspects of endocrine pathology in relation to coronavirus, severe medical cases resolved during periods of restriction, new data on the shift to types of pathologies related to delayed presentation to the doctor, related to the discontinuation of certain treatments or exposure to infection or chronic stress. Thus, new medical entities have emerged in the context of SARS-CoV-2 infection such as subacute thyroiditis, undifferentiated thyroid carcinoma with high incidence etc.

- What is your opinion on the influence that the current pandemic has and can have on patients with endocrine disorders?

AMG: The interferences are multiple, I mention a few: chronic stress is a recognized trigger of autoimmune thyroid diseases, including an aggravating factor; limiting physical activity can lead not only to overweight and their cardiovascular and metabolic complications, but also to a decrease in bone mass with effects on skeletal health. Endocrine pathology is not a contraindication for vaccination against COVID-19, being indicated in high-risk pathologies such as Cushing's syndrome, primary and secondary adrenal insufficiency.

However, the effect of chronic stress on the mental health of both patients and healthcare professionals should not be overlooked, as the incidence of physical and mental exhaustion, depersonalization increases, together with the decreasing in personal fulfillment and, last but not least, the decline in cognitive performance.

R: *Would you like to add something else, maybe an answer to an unaddressed question in this interview?*

AMG: Good luck and best wishes to all colleagues!

Thank you for your kindness in answering our questions!