Evidence-based neonatology – today and tomorrow

In June 2011, nearly 200 delegates from over 30 countries were gathered in Stockholm, Sweden, for the first ever evidence-based neonatology conference (EBNEO) (see Fig. 1). Three days were filled with interactive lectures and discussions. Given all good feedback from speakers and delegates, the organizers have already decided to arrange a second EBNEO, which will take place in Egypt in March 2013.

–Neonatal medicine has experienced a remarkable development through research. But, it may be difficult to translate this knowledge into clinical guidelines. Our mission with the conference was to facilitate the dissemination of evidence-based neonatal medicine, and to create a platform for communication between leading experts and neonatal staff. The overall vision is that care of newborn infants should be based on the best available evidence and that all newborn babies should have the same right to the best care no matter where they are born, says Stefan Johansson, Titus Schlinzig and Mikael Norman from the EBNEO organizing committee.

–The target audience was staff working in neonatal intensive care units around the world. Neonatologists, neonatal nurse practitioners, registered nurses, respiratory technicians, dieticians and other staff categories. We had representatives from all continents and a large proportion of the participants were clinically active. This resulted in an informal and interactive atmosphere throughout the meeting, says Stefan Johansson.

The program was put together to get the audience an evidence-based view on a variety of hot topics in neonatology. Central line-associated blood stream infection (CLABSI), hyperbilirubinaemia, hypotension, oxygenation, respiratory distress syndrome (RDS) and retinopathy of prematurity (ROP) were some of the many themes presented. In all, the evidence for and against over one hundred interventions in neonatal care was presented and discussed during the meeting. In addition, the question how to best implement new knowledge in clinical practice ran like a common thread throughout the conference.

–It usually takes a long time before new evidence is implemented in clinical practice. There are also large outcome variations between different neonatal intensive care units (NICUs), even in the same country. Another problem is that many of the systematic literature reviews published today are inconclusive and fail to provide specific recommendations. There is a need for new ideas in recognition of best evidence. For example, well-designed observational studies can sometimes have the same value as randomized clinical trials, says Mikael Norman and mentions the lecture...
held by Professor Shoo Lee, from the Canadian neonatal network.

–He presented a method for continuous evidence-based quality improvement. In addition to using available published evidence, the network collects data to evaluate local unit practices associated with outcome differences. In this way, successful practices in one NICU can be identified, tested and implemented for a faster targeted change in other NICUs, Mikael Norman explains.

In this supplement to Acta Paediatrica, published online, you will find papers based on some of the presentations from the conference. To serve people who could not come to Stockholm, all lectures are also available online free of charge on the EBNEO webcast for 1 year.

The EBNEO was organized by Karolinska Institutet and Karolinska University Hospital, together with an international program committee, but the idea to arrange a conference in evidence-based neonatology originated from 99 nicu, an international web community for professionals in neonatal medicine, with the aim to make neonatal staff share experience and knowledge regardless of geographical boundaries.

–Our aim is that the conference should circulate around the world between different countries and continents. The next time we will meet in Cairo, Egypt, in March 2013, and we hope there will be a third EBNEO in 2015. We have seen that there is a need for a conference in evidence-based neonatology, and we already have a long list of topics to highlight at future EBNEO meetings, says Stefan Johansson.

Useful links
EBNEO conference: www.ebneo.org
EBNEO webcast: www.webbtv.nu/ebneo2011
Live tweets: http://twitter.com/ebneo
99NICU web community: www.99nicu.org

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST
The author has declared no potential conflicts.

Anna Käll
anna.kall@karolinska.se