

Belgian Society of Anaesthesiology, Resuscitation, Perioperative Medicine and Pain management (BeSARPP)

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On January 9, 1847, J. Bosch, who was a surgeon and gynecologist in Liège performed the first ether anesthesia in Belgium, followed a few weeks later by another successful anesthesia with ether by P. Bessems, a surgeon from Antwerp^{1,2}. Despite these early attempts, it was only after World War II that anesthesiology really became recognized as an independent medical specialism. Indeed, before 1947 anesthesia was considered as a (largely unpopular) part of surgery, assigned to medical students, young residents or nurses. Interestingly, In Liège, prof. dr. L. Dautrebande, professor in pharmacology, had a specific interest for anesthetic vapors. In the 1930's he organized a free course in anesthesiology, after which participants received a certification of competence. In 1943 he published a book on the topic "Introduction à l'étude de l'anesthésie" which was then recognized as a comprehensive work on the chemistry of anesthesia.

During World War II Belgian medical doctors witnessed the skills of British and American army doctors, specifically trained in anesthesiology and as a consequence many of the first generation of Belgian anesthesiologists decided after the end of World War 2 to get their training in anesthesiology in the United Kingdom.

In 1948 the Royal Belgian Society for Surgery decided to establish a separate section of anesthesiology within the frame of their society. In 1954, the postgraduate formation in anesthesiology, that was already organized in the Belgian universities, was legally framed and in 1964, anesthesiology was recognized as an autonomic specialty. As a consequence, the Section of Anesthesiology of the Royal Belgian Society for Surgery became an independent scientific society, the Society for Anesthesia and Resuscitation of

Belgium (SARB), in Dutch, Belgische Vereniging voor Anesthesie en Reanimatie (BVAR), Société Belge d'Anesthésie et Réanimation (SBAR) in French.

The vision and mission of the SARB were:

- Promoting the study of the specialty, providing advice and disseminating information about anesthesia, resuscitation, intensive care, pain therapy, perioperative and peri-interventional medicine and related sciences and disciplines.
- Promoting scientific research, education, academic and clinical development, and the quality of care in the aforementioned domains through collaboration and integration with Belgian universities that offer training in medical sciences and specialist physicians in anesthesiology.
- The development of quality standards and evidence-based guidelines for good clinical practice.
- The organization of meetings, seminars, congresses, and grants on issues related to anaesthesia, resuscitation, pain therapy, intensive care, perioperative and peri-interventional medicine, and related sciences and disciplines.

The society is governed by a Board of Directors, consisting ex officio of the seven chairs of the Belgian training centers (Antwerp, Brussels (1 Flemish, 2 French), Ghent, Louvain, and Liège) and a minimum of six elected members (by the SARB members at the General Assembly of the society). Mandates of the elected members are for four years. The Board of Directors elects the positions of president and treasurer of the society. The president and the secretary-general are the official spokespersons of the society.

Early 2010, new legal rules necessitated the change of the society to a non-profit organization and the society's board of directors decided to take the opportunity of the bylaw adaptations to change the name of the society as well to the Belgian Society of Anaesthesiology, Resuscitation, Perioperative Medicine and Pain management in order to better reflect the entire field of anesthesiology. While documents from late 2015 still referred to the "2015 SARB Congress", official records indicate that by the time of the 2016 congress the official name BeSARPP was used.

The vision and mission of the BeSARPP are:

- A zero harm patient care through improving standards and practices in Anesthesiology, Resuscitation, Perioperative Medicine and Pain Management.
- Striving for top-quality care for all patients through innovation, research, and continuous education in order to improve patient safety, clinical outcomes, and lead advancements in the field.
- Prioritizing work-life balance and sustainability by equipping professionals with the skills and knowledge to meet evolving medical needs.
- Encourage professionals to provide care according to the highest standards of practice and patient safety.
- Promote education, training and research.
- Sustain the promotion of our the profession on national and international levels, in partnership with the society members, public health authorities, and fellow healthcare providers.

The situation in Belgium is rather specific with actually two official anesthesiology societies, the BeSARPP, which is the scientific society and the APSAR – BSAR, which is the professional society, which was founded already in 1947³. Both societies clearly have a distinct mission and scope of action. Yet, there are quite some projects where both societies cooperate.

An example of such cooperation is the initiative for the "Belgian Standards for Patient Safety in Anesthesia". This initiative aimed at developing a common statement and a number principles and improving perioperative safety for patients⁴. This initial statement from 1989 was subsequently updated in 2002 and 2019^{5,6}.

Another common initiative was the development of the Belgian recommendations on pre-operative evaluation of the patient. These guidelines were approved and endorsed by both societies in 1997 and subsequently published in the *Acta Anaesthesiologica Belgica*⁷.

Both societies are equally involved in the "Accreditation Committee for Anesthesiology" established in 1994, which is an accreditation system, that supervises continuous professional education for anesthesiologists in Belgium. In addition, representatives of both societies have a common committee, responsible for the certification of trainees in anesthesiology. These have to prove with records and a final exam at the end of their training period that they have been trained, and have a thorough knowledge and expertise, in all subspecialties of anesthesiology, including intensive care, emergency and pain medicine.

In 1989 the Flemish Evaluation Committee on Anesthesiology decided to start a theoretical "Course in Anesthesia" for all the residents in the first and second year (AVU Courses). This course took place on eight Saturdays alternating at the different Flemish universities in Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent and Louvain. After the second year of training an multiple choice examination was organised, with in case of failure, possibility for an oral second attempt. Candidates had to pass this exam before being allowed to pass to their third year of training. Since 2020 this exam has been replaced by the EDAIC (European Diploma of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care) part 1 exam, which is also a multiple choice exam. The Part I examination comprises two multiple true/false question (MTF) papers, one covering basic science and the other clinical anaesthesia and intensive care medicine⁸.

The BeSARPP's main activities focus on educational and scientific development for its members and the entire international anesthesiological community. Continuous professional education is provided by practice guidelines such as the guideline for procedural sedation⁹, but also the production of webinars, the organization of symposia, and meetings of BeSARPP and other societies such as the Belgian Association of Regional Anesthesia (BARA), the Belgian Association of Pediatric Anesthesia (BAPA), and the Belgian Association of Trainees (BAT). The most important educational and scientific activity of BeSARPP is its annual congress. This meeting provides a high-level and well-attended educational event where Belgian and international key opinion leaders present and discuss the latest advances in a specific - yearly changing – hot topic. This event also integrates the "Graduation Day", where trainees present and discuss, with a jury of experts, their Master after Master (Manama) in Anesthesiology, which is the final step for thesis acceptance as certified anesthesiologist in Belgium.

Finally, BeSARPP also supports institutional scientific research by providing yearly research grants. Members are invited to apply for such grants by submitting a detailed research protocol with cost estimation. These applications are evaluated by an international panel of experts. The winners of the grants are celebrated at the award ceremony at the annual national congress.

The BeSARPP has always had a very positive relationship with key industry partners. Without the support of industry research and education would be much more difficult to achieve.

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