

Report of the 12th ESO ESMINT ESNR Stroke Winter School

The 12th ESO ESMINT ESNR Stroke Winter School took place in the beautiful city of Bern, Switzerland, from January 28 to 31, 2025. Organized by a dedicated local team led by PD Dr. Thomas Meinel, PD Dr. Tomas Dobrocky, Prof. Urs Fischer, Prof. Jan Gralla, PD Dr. Eike Piechowiak, Dr. Sara Pilgram-Pastor, and PD Dr. Bastian Volbers, the event brought together top minds in neurology and neuroradiology to exchange cutting-edge knowledge and techniques in acute stroke care. Special thanks go to Alice Caneva, Selini Tsimachidis, and Martin Zbinden for their flawless administrative coordination.

This year's Winter School continued its mission to foster collaboration between neurologists and neuroradiologists across Europe. The consistently high volume of applicants – over 260 for just 64 spots – speaks to the program's prestige and the growing demand for state-of-the-art stroke education. Participants hailed from 21 countries including Armenia, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and United Kingdom.

The event launched with an enthusiastic welcome by PD Dr. Dobrocky and PD Dr. Meinel, accompanied by greetings from Prof. Simona Sacco (ESO) and Prof. Jan Gralla (ESMINT, ESNR). The opening session dove right into hot topics like the increasing burden of stroke globally, thrombolysis and thrombectomy advancements and prehospital stroke management.

A standout feature of this course is the blend of expert lectures, interactive tutorials, and hands-on workshops designed to push the boundaries of traditional training. With 37 dynamic speakers, including a strong representation of women and junior faculty (44% of participants and 30% of faculty), the program aimed to empower a new generation of stroke specialists. The course also received the WIN endorsement, which supports events that promote gender diversity by ensuring a platform for female voices.

Participants had the opportunity to engage in a diverse range of hands-on sessions in small groups, from mastering neuroangiography to exploring complex endovascular procedures. The tutorials focused on essential skills such as technical aspects of endovascular stroke treatment, complication management and best practices as well as advanced imaging techniques.

Neuroradiologists had an unparalleled opportunity to enhance their expertise through simulator sessions and live animal labs, where small groups practiced thrombectomy techniques under expert supervision. Neurologists engaged in stroke simulation workshops, navigating real-life case scenarios to refine time metrics, decision-making, teamwork and communication under pressure. This simulation served as a teaser to get certification for simulation and implement regular simulation trainings at the respective sites.

This year's curriculum addressed emerging challenges in stroke management. Alongside established topics like thrombectomy and thrombolysis, participants explored areas such as cerebral venous thrombosis and intracranial hemorrhage, ischemic strokes in less common locations like the spine and eyes as well as strategies for transient ischemic attacks (TIA) and mild strokes. The program emphasized interdisciplinary teamwork and culture of failure through case discussions and morbidity/mortality cases, allowing participants to learn from both faculty and peers in a supportive, collaborative setting.

None of this would have been possible without the generous support of our sponsors, including 1a Medical (Balt), Boehringer Ingelheim (Angels), Johnson&Johnson MedTech (Cerenovus), Medtronic, OM Pharma, Penumbra, Siemens Healthineers, Stryker, Terumo Neuro (MicroVention), Vascular Medical and Wallaby Phenox. Their contributions enabled us to deliver a comprehensive, impactful learning experience while being affordable for the participants – many of them in the early and mid-career phase and from developing European countries.

As we wrap up another successful Winter School, the organizing committee extends heartfelt thanks to all speakers and attendees. Your dedication to advancing stroke care is inspiring. We eagerly look forward to welcoming everyone back to Bern for the 13th ESO ESMINT ESNR Stroke Winter School, scheduled for January 27-30, 2026. Given the high demand, including numerous applications from South America, Asia and Africa, the Stroke Center Bern is simultaneously preparing for the next edition of the Asian Stroke Summer School and the launch of a newly established South American Stroke School. These initiatives will be developed in collaboration with local faculty and tailored to address region-specific topics.



Group photo 2025 (J. Abel)