

Mediterranean Pain Forum 2024 - Building a Bridge for Better Pain Management Education

Giuliano Lo Bianco¹, Sean Li², Miles Day³, Michael E Schatman^{4,5}

¹Anesthesiology and Pain Department, Fondazione Istituto "G. Giglio", Cefalù, Palermo, Italy; ²National Spine and Pain Centers, Shrewsbury, NJ, USA; ³Pain Research, The Pain Center at Grace Clinic, Department of Anesthesiology, Texas Tech University HSC, Lubbock, TX, USA; ⁴Department of Anesthesiology, Perioperative Care and Pain Medicine, NYU Grossman School of Medicine, New York, NY, USA; ⁵Department of Population Health – Division of Medical Ethics, NYU Grossman School of Medicine, New York, NY, USA

Correspondence: Michael E Schatman, Department of Anesthesiology, Perioperative Care & Pain Medicine, NYU Grossman School of Medicine, 550 First Avenue, New York, NY, 10016, USA, Tel +1 425-647-4880, Email Michael.Schatman@NYULangone.org

As the curtain prepares to rise on the Mediterranean Pain Forum (MPF) 2024, the anticipation is palpable among professionals in the field of pain management. Building upon the success of the 2023 congress, this year's event, scheduled for May 3rd-5th at Centro Congressi Costa Verde in Cefalù, Sicily, promises to be nothing short of outstanding. Opposite Cefalù lies the island of Filicudi, a locale steeped in history and significance for the Mediterranean Pain Forum Congress. It was here that John Bonica, the father of modern pain management whose influence extends throughout the medical world, was born.

Last year's program, under the stewardship of luminaries including Simon Thomson, Miles Day, and Sean Li, delved deep into the intricacies of managing chronic pain through interventional pain management. The comprehensive sessions covered a wide variety of topics, ranging from anatomy and physiopathology to cutting-edge interventions such as regenerative medicine and neuromodulation. Two hundred and eighty disciples of pain medicine attended the 2023 Forum live, with an even larger group of attendees anticipated for MPF 2024.

What made last year's MPF memorable was the multidisciplinary approach to pain education, bringing together experts from neurosurgery, orthopedics, anesthesiology, pain medicine, neurology, and physical medicine and rehabilitation. The roundtable discussions on complex cases showcased the synergy among these specialties, highlighting the collaborative nature of modern pain management.

Now, as we look forward to MPF 2024, the excitement is elevated. The expert faculty lineup includes numerous key opinion leaders: Sudhir Diwan, Leonardo Kapural, Silvia Natoli, Alaa Abd-Elsayed, Peter Staats, Adnan Al-Kaisy, and returning Miles Day and Sean Li. These experts will guide participants through contemporary approaches to chronic pain management, emphasizing the imperative of multidisciplinary integrative teams and patient-tailored therapies.

The program boasts sessions on the intersection of artificial intelligence and pain medicine, exploring the role of technology in diagnostics and treatment. International perspectives on pain medicine education will be discussed, advocating for comprehensive training and certification standards. The education of pain physicians is a topic conspicuously absent from pain management conferences, generally. Given the ongoing controversy regarding training physicians in pain medicine internationally, we will include a number of sessions on this topic, including an international round table that includes some of the world's foremost authorities on pain education.

Notable additions to this year's agenda include a duet session featuring Peter Staats and Sebastiano Mercadante, exploring the dichotomy in ultra-specialized roles for oncologic and benign pain management. Guidance on neuropathic pain assessment and a deep dive into imaging anatomy for pain physicians underscore the commitment to elucidating the cutting edges of practical wisdom and technology.

The sessions on chronic pain intervention have been meticulously curated, covering topics including facetogenic pain, epidurals steroid injections, regenerative medicine, and advanced techniques such as peripheral nerve stimulation. The

inclusion of a session on complications avoidance and a roundtable on the algorithm for treating chronic abdominal pain speaks volumes regarding the Forum's dedication to practical insights and innovation.

MPF 2024 will also witness a robust review of responsible opioid therapy, with Sebastiano Mercadante leading discussions on the state of the art in non-cancer pain management. We see this as an important component of our educational endeavor, as while opioids are not necessarily always the optimal treatment for chronic pain, we maintain that these medications need to remain in pain physicians' armamentaria. The program also delves into adjuvants, including exploration of the endocannabinoid system's potential therapeutic applications, as well as other medication categories.

Neuromodulation, a rapidly evolving field, takes center stage at MFP 2024. Discussion of a wide array of modalities in spinal cord and peripheral nerve stimulation, closed-loop systems, and updates on the current state and future possibilities in neuromodulation will hopefully serve to expand attendees' perspectives on safer and more effective pain management. The spine surgery and minimally invasive approaches sessions promise to unravel some of the complexities of spinal interventions.

Sessions on day 2 of the Congress will include current perspectives on opioid therapy, updates on dorsal root ganglion (DRG) and spinal cord stimulation, insights into headache and facial pain, addressing complications in spinal interventions, and controversies in imaging techniques. We are extremely excited to introduce a featured discussion of the top 10 pain medicine articles published in 2023, led by Alaa Abd-Elseyed, that will include a panel for spirited discussion. The participation of renowned experts including Dirk De Ridder, Adnan Al-Kaisy, Alfonso Papa, and Stefano Tamburin ensures a rich exchange of knowledge and ideas on the second day of the conference.

The third and final day of the congress is reserved for an enriching array of hands-on workshops that will help attendees reconsider the landscape of pain medicine. The esteemed faculty, comprised of leading experts in the field, will guide attendees through an immersive experience in advanced pain management techniques:

WORKSHOP I | Comprehensive Physical and Neurological Examination Course

The day kicks off with an exclusive course delving into comprehensive physical and neurological examinations. Renowned physiatrist, Domenico Restivo, opens the session with a History and Physical Exam Course, followed by neurologist Eleonora Galosi, exploring the intricacies of Neurological Examinations. The morning concludes with radiologist Giuseppe Peritore's session on "MRI and CT Scan Imaging Anatomy for Pain Physicians", offering a unique insight into the anatomical aspects crucial for optimal pain diagnosis and management.

WORKSHOP II | Hands-On Fluoroscopy Workshop – Lumbar Procedures

Led by an esteemed panel including Carmelo Costa, Miles Day, and Sean Li, participants will engage in practical sessions covering various techniques such as interlaminar epidurals, caudal epidurals, and lumbar facet radiofrequency ablations. This workshop promises to sharpen procedural skills and thus enhance expertise in lumbar pain interventions.

WORKSHOP III | Live Model Ultrasound Demonstration in Pain Medicine

The dynamic duo of Domenico Albano and Fabrizio Micheli will focus on advancements in pain medicine through an in-depth exploration of ultrasound techniques. Attendees will witness live model ultrasound demonstrations at 6 stations, covering upper limb musculoskeletal (MSK) pain procedures, lower limb MSK pain procedures, cervical spine procedures, thoracic spine procedures, lumbar spine and sacrum procedures, and abdominal and pelvic procedures. The interactive rotations and detailed anatomical demonstrations will provide valuable insights.

The workshops at MPF 2024 not only offer a unique opportunity to learn from experts, but will also provide an opportunity for attendees to engage, question, and refine their skills in the rapidly evolving field of interventional pain management. These workshops epitomize the commitment of MPF to foster knowledge, collaboration, and innovation in the pursuit of effective pain relief.

As we embark on this journey through the Mediterranean Pain Forum 2024, it is evident that this year's program is not just an evolution; it is a significant leap forward. The expert faculty assembled, the breadth of topics covered, and the commitment to practical, multidisciplinary insights make MPF 2024 an event not to be missed for those interested in raising their levels of clinical insight and efficacy in the complex and vital field of pain management.

Demonstrating our dedication to a high level of academic and educational excellence, we are pleased to have received endorsement for the 2024 MPF from the World Institute of Pain (WIP). MPF 2024 will be accredited for continuing medical education (CME) credits through the European Union of Medical Specialists (EUMS) for the following categories: Physicians (Anaesthesia and Intensive Care | Internal Medicine | General Medicine | Geriatrics | Haematology | Oncology | General Surgery | Orthopedics | Physiatry | Palliative Care | Radiodiagnostics | Radiotherapy), and Nurses and Physiotherapists. The CMEs will be converted for CMEs for North American healthcare providers based on agreements between EUMS and the American Medical Association, and the EUMS and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

For those readers interested in learning more about the Mediterranean Pain Forum, including registration, please visit the following link: <https://www.mediterraneanpainforum.com>.

Disclosure

Dr Giuliano Lo Bianco reports personal fees from Stryker Italia and Abbott, outside the submitted work. Dr Michael Schatman reports research consultant for Modoscript, AdComm from Syneos Health, outside the submitted work. The authors report no other conflicts of interest in this work.

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