

## PAOLA ANNA ERBA Upcoming EANM President

Paola Anna Erba is set to assume the role of EANM President in January 2025, following Rudi Dierckx's tenure. In anticipation of her upcoming leadership, we invite you to delve into her interview, where she shares insights into her professional journey and her vision for her future work as EANM President.



### 1. Nuclear Medicine is rapidly advancing and getting increasing interest within the medical community. Could you walk us through your journey into this unique field?

I obtained my MD from the University of Insubria and then pursued a postgraduate specialty in Nuclear Medicine at the University of Pisa – after initially studying in Genoa. My journey began with a thesis on a Nuclear Medicine-related topic, which led to an internship where I used my knowledge of Excel to manage the institution's paediatrics database – I was the only one young enough to know how to use Excel at that time in the department. This experience sparked my interest in the field.

I then started in the RIA lab, where students were allowed. I learned the importance of connecting patient history to lab test results and gained hands-on experience and a deeper understanding of patient care and clinical outcomes. During this internship, I realised the importance of all the diagnostic procedures, including imaging in clinical care. This is something that is really underestimated: everybody is doing it, but very few value it. Nuclear medicine fascinated me because it reveals the invisible workings of the body, offering a tangible glimpse into the patient's journey.

In 2002, I joined the University staff in Pisa. Still too young to be fascinated by research, in 2013, I pursued my PhD in Imaging Cardiovascular Infections from the University Medical Center Groningen in the Netherlands. Moving around was not easy while working, but I quickly understood the importance of seizing every opportunity in this field. My boss fully supported and pushed me. This is the advice I would give to young professionals: take risks, it pays off! This experience was life-

changing, as it was also where I met my future husband.

My career has since then been quite international, taking me from Pisa to Milan, Groningen, and Haifa. In every place, I was lucky to have a mentor who has become a friend over time. Over the years, I developed a strong interest in clinical trials and cardiovascular infections. I recently moved from Pisa to the University of Milan Bicocca and to the Hospital Papa Giovanni XXIII in Bergamo for my clinical work, where I am the chair of the department. It is a new challenge. Not easy to start from scratch, but it is never too late to take steps in life...

**2. Since its establishment in 1985, the EANM has been dedicated to expanding the reach and enhancing the visibility of nuclear medicine worldwide. What convinced you to invest your time in its mission?**

I first encountered the EANM in 2001 when I participated in the EANM Annual Congress in Napoli as a resident. I was impressed by the EANM's unique approach compared to other nuclear medicine organisations. I found it much more people-oriented. As a resident, I could not attend every year due to limited funding. Programmes like the EANM Next-Gen funding programme, which now provides free accommodation and registration to 100 young professionals, did not exist back then.

My involvement with the EANM grew when I joined the EANM Inflammation & Infection Committee and represented this committee at the European School of Nuclear Medicine (ESNM). When the EANM Board, under the presidency of Arturo Chiti, transformed ESNM into the European School of Multimodality Imaging and Therapy (ESMIT), I chaired ESMIT Level 2, organising schools across Europe. This was a wonderful opportunity to work with and interact within the EANM and allied communities to build a new educational format aimed at the future.

Later, I joined the Board and became Education Chair, working even more closely with ESMIT. Learning from this experience and wanting to continue my involvement with the Board, I ran for the position of EANM President-Elect and was elected in 2022.

What I truly admire about the EANM is its non-competitive, supportive community. The organisation's activities are based on mentorship, advice, and support for the younger generation of nuclear medicine professionals. I really wanted to use some of my time to embrace these aspects even more.

**3. You were elected EANM President-Elect in September 2022 and will officially take over the position of EANM President in January 2025. As you look ahead, what are your grand plans for when you assume the EANM presidency?**

The current situation is very positive, and I am excited to take over from President Rudi Dierckx. Despite the many challenges ahead, as both the nuclear medicine community and the EANM are

growing significantly, we need more resources and must think about our future. This is why we are focusing on involving young professionals—they are our future.

My presidency will be dedicated to understanding the needs and expectations of the new workforce. The medical world, including our field, is experiencing a worrying workforce shortage, and we must do everything possible to address this issue. Radioligand therapy will be a pivotal topic during my presidency. We need to focus more on patients, as they are at the heart of our work. Growing to promote novelty without losing the well-established core of our discipline is the real challenge for the future.

During my tenure as President-Elect, I have worked closely with the Executive Office's team dedicated to EU Affairs and EU projects, as well as the EANM Policy & Regulatory Affairs Committee (PRAC). I was involved in the consortium developing the ERASMUS+ RLT Academy and participated in many events dedicated to our field's future and visibility. I am aware of the challenges we face in this area. In my opinion, we must focus on three key aspects: (1) continuing our partnership with clinical partner societies, (2) developing more data evidence and professionalising our community, and (3) involving more EU stakeholders.

#### **4. Beyond the Blouse: Deep down, what is your real motivation for coming to Vienna regularly?**

To be perfectly honest, one of my main motivations for coming to Vienna every year is the strudel and opera music. I could never get tired of it!