



The History of AG-KAPT

The Swiss Working Group for Cardiovascular Nurses and Allied Professionals, the AG-KAPT, is a Working Group of the Swiss Society of Cardiology (SSC) and a National Society of the Association of Cardiovascular Nurses and Allied Professionals of the European Society of Cardiology (ACNAP). Affiliation with both of these organizations has been essential to the successful establishment and continuous growth of AG-KAPT.

In 1997, AG-KAPT was founded as an organization for medical technical personnel working in cardiac catheterization labs. The impetus to have an organization for technicians came from interventional cardiologists who subsequently asked the SSC to accept this new group as an official Working Group. Ten years later, in 2007, the Working Group expanded its orientation and purpose to include all cardiovascular nurses and allied professionals. Throughout the years, the SSC has supported AG-KAPT to become a more professional organization, and provided a legitimacy within the Swiss cardiology world. In addition, the SSC has provided financial and operative support to create and maintain a webpage, designated facilities for a full day of scientific sessions devoted to cardiovascular nursing, made official documents available to adapt specifically for our organization, included AG-KAPT on its scientific committee, and provided continuous services to maintain and build the working group.

ACNAP's contribution to the establishment of AG-KAPT has been significant in helping to define the vision, focus and structure as well as adapting the name¹. Although AG-KAPT was not an official member of the National Societies Committee until 2007, a Swiss cardiac nurse, Marcia Leventhal, was elected to the Nucleus of the WG-24 in 2001 and served as chair of the National Societies Committee (NSC) for the next 6 years. The NSC consisted of older established societies and newly established or establishing societies, and many discussions focused on organizational problems of the national societies. This experience strongly influenced the reorganization of AG-KAPT into a national society for all Swiss nurses and allied professionals working with cardiovascular patients.

As the WG-24 advanced into a council, CCNAP, their new structure was adopted and adapted for AG-KAPT. This is reflected in AG-KAPT representing all cardiovascular nurses and allied professionals while supporting sub-divisions devoted to developing skills and knowledge in specific areas of cardiovascular care. These sub-divisions are called 'Interest Groups' and at present include three: the Interest Group for Heart Failure Nurses, the Interest Group for Nurses and Technicians in Electrophysiology, and the Interest Group for Nurses and Therapists in Congenital Heart Diseases. Today AG-KAPT has 320 members and is the largest working group within the SSC.

Similar to CCNAP, AG-KAPT has a special committee dedicated to planning scientific sessions as well as serving as consultant to other Swiss groups providing continuing-education courses focusing on cardiovascular nursing.

Affiliation with ACNAP has built valuable international collaborations, leading to many European specialist nurses being invited as guest speakers for our annual congress as well as opening opportunities for European specialist nurses to serve as advisors and collaborators for scientific studies. One noteworthy guest was Professor Christi Deaton, who was invited to participate in the annual SSC congress celebrating its 70 years' anniversary. Professor Deaton provided a comprehensive overview of the history of ACNAP, its position within the ESC, and a look to the future.

Special ACNAP Projects involving AG-KAPT

Congress: Euro Heart Care

- Switzerland has hosted the Euro Heart Care Congress (previously called the Annual Spring Meeting), twice. In 2005 the 5th Annual Spring Meeting of the WG-24 was held in Basel (together with the Institute of Nursing Science, University of Basel). This was the first time that a Spring Meeting was translated into the language of the host country. In 2010 the 10th Annual Spring Meeting of CCNAP was held in Geneva, co-sponsored by ACNAP and AG-KAPT. One featured session focused on REGA, a Swiss company that operates helicopter rescues in the Swiss Mountains as well as bringing specialists and equipment from a central hospital to patients in need e.g. extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO).

Delegates attended both of these congresses from throughout Europe, North and South America and Australia and feedback was very positive.

Programs and Courses provided by the ESC and ACNAP involving AG-KAPT members:

- National Society Committee membership has been very beneficial for AG-KAPT. For example, the 'Fly In- Fly Out' meetings improved our ability to transfer information about 'best practice' to our members. Discussions on diversity in Europe and language barriers within the ESC not only raised issues facing our national society, but also included the possibility that the ESC provides both direct support and translation of documents.
- AG-KAPT's leaders participate in the various ACNAP meetings, including the courses at the European Heart House in Sophia Antipolis (F). Two of our members attended a Train the Trainers' workshop where the CCNAP initiative 'Be Guidelines Smart', was introduced. This initiative consists of a Toolkit for all cardiovascular nurses and allied professionals in Europe, with the aim to support guideline-compliant, efficient and effective care for cardiac patients.

The Toolkit, designated to help in implementing the newest guidelines, was then introduced to the members of the AG KAPT and the Interest Groups. Sessions on 'guidelines to practice' take place within our annual congresses. The strong focus on bringing guidelines into nursing practice has led to an increased awareness and sensitivity amongst our members.

- Our members are often asked for their input on various projects such as informational webpages (e.g. Heart Failure Matters) and proposed curriculum for heart failure nurses.

Future perspective

AG-KAPT is committed to continuous growth and development, and is dedicated to integrating and fostering all areas of cardiovascular nursing. Within these goals, supporting the creation of new Interest Groups and encouraging members to be more involved on a national and international level are two major priorities.

To provide nurses and allied professionals with a platform to present special clinical projects, a new workshop within the annual congress has been dedicated to examples from the actual clinical practice. These sessions have received great interest and enthusiasm from the audiences, leading them to be incorporated as a permanent component of future programs offered by AG-KAPT.

AG-KAPT would like to make evidence-based nursing knowledge easily accessible in the future and is grateful for the close cooperation with ACNAP.

¹*The AG-KAP, or Arbeitsgruppe für kardiovaskuläre Assistenzpersonal (Working Group for Interventional Assistants), became the AG-KAPT, Arbeitsgruppe für kardiovaskuläre Pflege und Therapien (Working Group for Cardiovascular Nurses and Allied Professionals).*