

BEYOND THE PROGRAMME: WHAT THE XII LATVIAN GASTROENTEROLOGY CONGRESS REVEALS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF GASTROENTEROLOGY

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On 29 November 2025, the ATTA Centre hosted the XII Latvian Gastroenterology Congress with international participation, marking the second time this premier scientific venue has convened at this location. Owing to its scale, sustained legacy, and measurable contribution to professional and scientific advancement, the congress is widely recognised as one of the most consequential medical forums in the contemporary history of Latvian healthcare.

With a distinguished history spanning more than two decades, the congress is held biennially and has progressively evolved into the largest and most influential gastroenterology congress in Eastern Europe. It serves as a central academic and professional platform, facilitating international scientific exchange, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and defining strategic directions for the advancement of gastroenterology, hepatology, and related biomedical disciplines. The sustained scientific relevance and international reach of the congress have been formally documented in prior publications, confirming its role as a key academic and professional hub within the region (Derovs *et al.*, 2024).

The enduring mission of the congress is to ensure that physicians in Latvia have direct access to the most current developments in both national and global gastroenterology, by convening leading opinion-makers, clinical innovators, and academic experts within a unified scientific forum. Through this integrative platform, the congress facilitates the dissemination of evidence-based knowledge and promotes the alignment of local clinical practice with international standards. The congress is organised by the Digestive Diseases Society in collaboration with the Gastroenterology Support Society, Rīga Stradiņš University, the Latvian Association of Gastroenterologists, and

other leading professional medical organisations in Latvia, with additional support from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Latvia. This broad institutional partnership underscores the congress's national importance and affirms its strategic role in advancing healthcare development, medical education, and clinical excellence.

The 2025 congress featured scientific presentations delivered by distinguished invited faculty from Germany, Italy, Austria, and Turkey, further strengthening the congress's international standing and expanding its visibility within the broader European and global gastroenterology community.

Throughout its existence, the congress has made a substantial and sustained contribution to the advancement of healthcare quality in Latvia. By providing physicians and healthcare professionals with access to contemporary scientific evidence and expert-led discussion, it has enabled the integration of modern diagnostic and therapeutic approaches in the management of gastrointestinal diseases. This long-term impact on clinical practice and patient care represents a defining characteristic of the congress and underlies its high regard within the professional community, as reflected by the continued growth and diversification of its participant base.

The XII Latvian Gastroenterology Congress was formally inaugurated by Hosams Abu Meri, Minister of Health of the Republic of Latvia; Professor Aigars Pētersons, Rector of Rīga Stradiņš University; and Professor Joost Drenth (Netherlands), President of the United European Gastroenterology. Their participation reflects the congress's high level of international recognition and highlights the successful integration of Latvian gastroenterology within the broader European professional and academic landscape.



Fig. 1. Organising Committee and Strategic collaborators; from the left: Aleksejs Derovs, Secretary of the Scientific Committee and the Treasurer; Hosams Abu Meri, Minister of Health of the Republic of Latvia; Jeļena Derova, Chairwoman of the Organising Committee; Juris Pokrotnieks, Secretary of the Organising Committee; Aigars Pētersons, Rector of Riga Stradiņš University.



Fig. 2. Before the opening: The Main Hall awaits.

Modern physicians are required to navigate an increasingly complex and rapidly evolving landscape of scientific knowledge, diagnostic technologies, and therapeutic strategies — ranging from precision medicine and microbiome research to drug interaction management, personalised treatment approaches, and effective multidisciplinary collaboration across medical specialties. In this context, the Latvian Gastroenterology Congress occupies a uniquely important role. Its multidisciplinary scientific format provides a comprehensive platform for physicians to access the latest advances in biomedical science, exchange clinical expertise, and establish enduring professional collaborations with both national peers and internationally recognised experts.

Gastroenterology represents a uniquely integrative field of medicine, inherently encompassing and connecting multiple related disciplines, including internal medicine, hepatology, surgery, oncology, endocrinology, immunology, and other biomedical specialties. This integrative nature underlies the broad professional resonance of the congress and explains its relevance across diverse areas of clinical practice and medical research. Despite the relatively small number of certified gastroenterologists in Latvia — approximately 50 specialists nationwide — the congress has demonstrated steadily increasing engagement from physicians representing a wide range of other medical disciplines. This expanding interdisciplinary participation reflects the congress's growing importance not only



Fig. 3. Hands-on Training in progress.



Fig. 4. Learning by doing: Hands-on Session.

within gastroenterology but across the healthcare system as a whole. The sustained growth and increasing influence of the congress are further illustrated by its participant dynamics. While the inaugural Latvian Gastroenterology Congress in 2003 brought together approximately 200 participants, the event has evolved over the past decade into a major professional platform regularly attracting around 1000 healthcare professionals. In 2025, the number of officially registered participants exceeded 1200, representing one of the highest levels of engagement in the congress's history and reaffirming its scientific relevance and institutional attractiveness. The congress has thus developed into a truly interdisciplinary scientific forum, attracting not only physicians, but also nurses, pharmacists, medical residents, students, and other healthcare professionals. This diverse professional audience fosters a dynamic environment for scientific dialogue, facilitates the transfer of knowledge across specialties and generations, and further consolidates the congress's position as one of the most important professional medical education events in Latvia.

One of the most significant innovations of the 2025 congress — an initiative of which the Organising Committee is particularly proud — was the establishment of a new collaborative partnership with the Latvian Veterinary Medical Association. In our view, this represents an important and forward-looking step in the evolution of the congress, reflecting a modern and integrative approach to healthcare and biomedical science. Although human and veterinary medicine may traditionally be perceived as distinct disciplines, they share a number of fundamental challenges at both national and global levels. Among the most pressing of these is antimicrobial resistance, which continues to escalate worldwide, driven in part by the widespread availabil-

ity and frequently suboptimal or insufficiently regulated use of antimicrobial agents. Both fields also confront parasitic diseases affecting humans and animals, as well as shared pharmacological considerations, given that many therapeutic agents exhibit identical or closely related chemical structures and mechanisms of action across species. Furthermore, the gastrointestinal system itself represents a common biological and pathological interface, with numerous disease processes — including immune-mediated and inflammatory conditions — observed in both human and veterinary clinical contexts. These shared scientific and clinical dimensions make such collaboration both logical and strategically important.

Within this collaborative framework, the congress hosted a dedicated multidisciplinary satellite symposium entitled “One Health – Humans & Animals: Antimicrobial Resistance and Parasitology”. The symposium brought together physicians and veterinary professionals, creating a unique interdisciplinary forum for the exchange of expertise and perspectives. This format enabled participants to examine both the shared and distinct aspects of antimicrobial resistance and parasitic diseases within the broader conceptual framework of One Health, emphasising the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health. The veterinary medical community was represented by Professors Kaspars Kovaļenko and Dace Keidāne, while the clinical medicine perspective was presented by Associate Professor Sniedze Laivacuma. The symposium was chaired by Professors Ilmārs Dūritis and Angelika Krūmiņa, whose leadership ensured a high level of scientific rigour and facilitated a balanced interdisciplinary dialogue. We are sincerely honoured that the Latvian Veterinary Medical Association accepted our invitation to participate in the Latvian Gastroenterology Congress. We are confident that this collaboration represents the foundation of a sustainable and strategically important partnership, with the potential to evolve into a major interdisciplinary platform supporting scientific dialogue, translational research, and the development of integrated approaches to the protection of both human and animal health.

In addition to its core gastroenterology themes, the 2025 congress strategically highlighted several priority areas reflecting the evolving challenges and future directions of contemporary medicine. Particular emphasis was placed on gastrointestinal oncology, inflammatory bowel diseases — the incidence of which continues to rise across developed countries — and rare diseases, including rare hepatological conditions. The scientific programme also addressed antimicrobial resistance, the implementation of updated clinical guidelines, and a range of additional topics of direct relevance to daily clinical practice and healthcare delivery in Latvia.

XII LATVIJAS GASTROENTEROLOĢIJAS KONGRESS: STARPDISCIPLINĀRA PLATFORMA GASTROENTEROLOĢIJAS NĀKOTNEI

2025. gada 29. novembrī ATTA centrā notikušais XII Latvijas Gastroenteroloģijas kongress ar starptautisku dalību apliecināja, ka šis forums jau sen pārsniedz vienas medicīnas nozares pasākuma robežas. Vairāk nekā 1200 dalībnieku, ārvalstu lektori, desmit specializēti satelītsimpoziji, praktisko iemaņu zona un pirmā sadarbība ar Latvijas Veterinārārstu biedrību iezīmēja kongresu kā plašu starpdisciplināru platformu.

Kongresa programma atspoguļoja mūsdienu gastroenteroloģijas attīstības virzienus — no iekaisīgām zarnu slimībām, onkoloģijas, retām aknu slimībām un mikrobiotas līdz antimikrobiālajai rezistencei, *One Health* pieejai, personalizētai medicīnai un jaunām diagnostikas un ārstēšanas tehnoloģijām. Vienlaikus kongress parādīja, ka gastroenteroloģija Latvijā kļūst par nozari, kas arvien ciešāk savieno klīnisko praksi, zinātni, izglītību, sabiedrības veselību un starptautisku sadarbību.

Alongside the plenary session, the congress featured ten specialised satellite symposia conducted in parallel across multiple scientific halls, enabling participants to engage with thematic areas most closely aligned with their clinical and academic interests. These sessions addressed a broad spectrum of emerging and interdisciplinary topics, including the brain-gut-cardiovascular axis, advances in diagnostic and interventional radiology, the evolving role of the intestinal endocrine system, including L-cells, GLP-1, and GLP-2 signalling pathways, multidisciplinary perspectives on osteoporosis beyond traditional specialty boundaries, novel strategies for microbiota modulation, and integrated approaches to liver and intestinal health.

A particularly notable innovation introduced at this year's congress was the establishment of a comprehensive Hands-on Training Zone, providing participants with direct exposure to the latest technological advancements and clinically relevant procedural techniques. This interactive format significantly strengthened the congress's emphasis on translational applicability, fostering the practical implementation of scientific advances and facilitating the effective transfer of knowledge from theoretical frameworks to real-world clinical practice.

The Latvian Gastroenterology Congress represents far more than a professional gathering; it constitutes a dynamic scientific and clinical platform where research and clinical practice converge, experience intersects with innovation, and national expertise is integrated within the broader international context. It provides a unique forum for engagement among professionals who not only observe the evolution of the field but actively contribute to shaping the future of gastroenterology in Latvia and within the wider European medical community.

Participation in the congress offers physicians and healthcare professionals access to current scientific knowledge, emerging clinical insights, and professional inspiration, facilitating the translation of new evidence into routine clinical practice, multidisciplinary collaboration, and institutional development. This continuous exchange of knowledge, expertise, and professional perspective reinforces the congress's role as a critical reference point in the ongoing advancement of gastroenterology and healthcare quality at both national and regional levels.

REFERENCES

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