

Kindhearted, determined firecracker: A tribute to Radislav Nakov

We are speechless and heartbroken having to pass along the sad news that Radislav Nakov, an extremely active member of the UEG community, has died on Thursday 11 November 2021 at 32 years of age.

Radislav—or simply Radi as he was known within UEG—was one of the most charismatic, passionate, determined and inclusive persons we have ever met, full of ideas and positivity. Radislav invested all these qualities in his job and his activities within UEG and his friendships.

Radislav was born in 1989 in Sofia, Bulgaria, where he pursued his academic path and achieved specialisation in gastroenterology and philosophy, ultimately becoming an assistant professor in gastroenterology.

Early on, Radislav had a deep commitment to improve the conditions of his fellow medical students and gastroenterology trainees in Bulgaria and across Europe. He strongly believed in the relevance of a comprehensive, updated and inclusive medical education, as well as in the strategic importance of networking. His track record is testament to this.

Radislav founded and coordinated the Bulgarian association of medical students and later the Bulgarian association of young gastroenterologists, influencing and forming a whole new generation of young, enthusiastic gastroenterologists who are actively engaged in exchanging views and experiences with other European colleagues within and without UEG.

Radislav joined the UEG in 2016, attending that year's UEG Summer School and UEG Week. In 2018, he was chosen as a Young Talent Group (YTG) member. This was the beginning of a close friendship and many fond UEG memories.¹⁻³

At every meeting, Radislav presented brilliant and fresh ideas and was able to build a funny and friendly atmosphere. He served as the Young Talent Group's cross-representative in the Education Committee and was soon appointed as Course Director of the UEG Summer School due to his indispensable abilities in organising and teaching.

During these years, Radislav was particularly interested in working to guarantee equal training opportunities for all European young gastroenterologists, with special focus on those with limited access to educational content and hands on training. He was a crucial driver in forming several UEG/YTG projects, including a blog for

young gastroenterologists (GIs), giving a voice to GI trainees across Europe. His ability to build bridges, meet new people and speak for underrepresented groups within GI led to his appointment to the UEG Equality and Diversity Taskforce in 2020, a post which he held up until his death.⁴

Radislav dedicated most of his last years to research, building innovative, international and inclusive research networks focussing on functional GI disorders and gut microbiota, inflammatory bowel disease but also pancreatic disorders and rare diseases. Here, his networking skills and enthusiasm led to many well published multicenter collaborative studies and consensus reports in different areas of gastroenterology.⁵

Radislav was a pioneer in several fields of digestive diseases in his country: he assessed the prevalence of functional GI disorders in the Bulgarian population and, after a training period at the Catholic University of Rome, he was the first to establish a stool bank in Eastern Europe and to perform fecal microbiota transplants in Bulgaria.

Based on his track record, Radislav was invited to join the governing boards of several European scientific societies, including the European Association of Gastroenterology, Endoscopy and Nutrition (EAGEN), and the European Society of Neurogastroenterology and Motility (ESNM), of which he also founded a national section in Bulgaria.

Notably, as part of the Y Generation (or Millennials), he applied his knowledge of social media to enhance medical education. Radislav founded 'Medical News', an educational platform for Bulgarian doctors. He was extremely active as an UEG Ambassador disseminating scientific and educational content via the UEG Young GI Network, EAGEN and ESNM platforms and several other science-related Facebook groups.

Apart from being the colleague that everyone wants to work with, a teacher, a mentor—he was a close and loyal friend to both of us. Radi had the rare quality of being a true friend you could count on no matter what. We are grateful to have known his friendship.

His enthusiasm, characteristic laugh and his strong belief that there is good in every person will be tremendously missed.

Radislav's legacy to the GI community is huge and we as UEG need to carry on his ideals of inclusiveness, equality and promotion of medical education and research across Europe—

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however we will only ever aspire to do this with Radislav's trademark warmth and kindness—and cheeky glint in his eyes. Radi is simply irreplaceable.

Our thoughts are with his wife, Radina, his family and his friends.

KEYWORDS

gastroenterology, GI network, Radislav Nakov, simply Radi, UEG/YTG projects

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

None.

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