EuroDURG bulletin

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EUROPEAN DRUG UTILIZATION RESEARCH GROUP

Editors. *This issue was prepared by the following members of the Executive Committee of EuroDURG: Peter Mol, Monique Elseviers, Robert Vander Stichele, Hege Salvesen Blix, Vera Vlahović-Palčevski, Bjørn Wettermark, Ria Benko.*
Send reactions to:benko@clph.szote.u-szeged.hu

Dear friends,

I am proud to offer you this new edition of the EuroDURG bulletin. Thanks to the lasting engagement of all members of the Executive Committee (ExCo), EuroDURG still forms the platform for drug utilization research in Europe. More than one year after taking the lead of this organization, I realize what it means to have a good team available to work out all initiatives. They are all doing this on a voluntary base, despite the heavy demands of their job. I want to thank them for all their efforts.

During the last year, we met many of the European DUR researchers during the ISPE conference in Quebec (August 19-22, 2007) and the EACPT conference in Amsterdam (August 29 – September 1, 2007). In Quebec, EuroDURG was actively involved in the organization of a pre-conference course focusing for the first time on drug utilization research techniques. We worked out two symposia, one on prescribing quality indicators and one on pharmaceutical care in nursing homes. In the line of the tradition, we also organized a DUR posterwalk with poster award. In Amsterdam, all national DUR groups were invited to attend a EuroDURG General Assembly (see minutes on page 6-8). During this meeting, it was decided to delete countries from the EuroDURG list if they did not pay their membership fees for several years.

EuroDURG continued to survive on a limited budget, mainly dependent on the contribution of national DURG groups (see News from the treasurer on page 2-3). With this budget, we were able to organize five teleconferences and to keep our website updated during the last year. We were and still are involved in two EU projects. For the DRUID project, focusing on the problem of driving under the influence of drugs, alcohol and medicines, we offered some help to identify data providers of national consumption data of drugs with central nervous system effects. As a partner of the HAPPY AUDIT project, we made a proposal of prescribing quality indicators for antibiotics in primary care (see European Projects) and decided that Vera Vlahović-Palčevski. and Robert Vander Stichele will be our representatives in the planned Delphi rounds aiming to obtain a definitive selection of prescribing indicators.

In the last edition of this bulletin, we reported on the inaugural meeting of the Special Interest Group – Drug Utilization Research (SIG-DUR) of ISPE. They started with the installation of five project groups, each with an ambitious program putted down in clear objectives. After one year, the group responsible for the development of an ATC/DDD browser of national drug registries is ready to pilot the project. European national groups involved in the maintenance of their national drug registry system are kindly invited to participate (see International ATC-DDD browser on page 3-4). In the workgroup of Cross National Comparison, two of our ExCo members, Vera Vlahović-Palčevski. and Katrin Jahnsen took the lead in the development of a questionnaire aiming to gather worldwide

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information on the organization and the availability of drug utilization data at the national level. Within one month, they will start contacting National Chairs of DUR organizations to identify the right person to fill the questionnaire. The collected data will be presented during the ISPE conference 2008 (see Cross National comparison on page 4)

For this year, EuroDURG will continue to participate in the EU projects of HAPPY AUDIT and DRUID. We will continue our engagement in the workgroups of SIG-DURG. Moreover, since the ISPE conference will be organized again in Europe this year, we will take a more active part in the conference organization. Robert Vander Stichele will be a member of the scientific committee, we will organize again a pre-conference DUR course and we will submit several proposals for symposia and workshops. Beside the special poster session of cross-national comparison of drug utilization data, we will organize again a DUR posterwalk. We kindly invite all European researchers in the field of drug utilization to come to Copenhagen from 17 to 20 August 2008. Please distribute this invitation to all interested research groups in your country and submit your abstracts by Friday, February 15.
Do not miss this unique opportunity to receive all the latest information in the field of DUR, to present your research work and to meet your colleagues and friends.
At the General Assembly that will be organized during the conference in Copenhagen, a final decision will be taken about the future of EuroDURG.
The possibility of a more definitive merge with ISPE was already discussed during the conferences in Bordeaux (2005), Lisbon (2006) and Amsterdam (2007). Advantages of this merge would be to belong to a greater organization with more financial, administrative and organizational power. Disadvantages could be that financial concerns will keep individuals away from a ISPE membership. Additionally, a merge with ISPE gave reason for concern about the European identity in the field of DUR. We know that several countries will stop their involvement in EuroDURG by the end of this year and that they definitively made the choice to join ISPE. Others still have their doubts about a possible merge with ISPE.

In Amsterdam, we launched a new proposal with the future role of EuroDURG as a coordinating centre for DUR studies in Europe. Our proposal is to develop these activities as a special chapter of ISPE, keeping the rights to engage in European projects, to maintain a European network of DUR researchers with communication via an own website or web pages, etc.

We invite all national chairs to discuss this proposal with your members and to inform us about your opinion **before the end of February**.

Then we will be able to work out a scenario with ISPE that we can propose during the next General Assembly in Copenhagen.

Please send your opinion to monique.elseviers@ua.ac.be
at latest the February the 29th.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Monique Elseviers
Chair EuroDURG

News from the treasurer

The financial position of EuroDURG has remained stable over the past year. Expenditures and incomes are balanced and remained modest. The main costs are for the bimonthly teleconferences of the Executive Committee (ExCo) and the maintenance of the EuroDURG website. The sole income of the organization has been from national membership fees. During the past year the executive committee has strived to reduce expenditures by exploring the possibility of teleconferencing with Skype. After three meetings, due to connectivity problems in some countries and the poor sound quality, the ExCo decided to have regular teleconferences again. The ExCo also decided to stay with the current web host in view of the relatively large one-off investments required to move the website. Long-term cost savings may not be worth the initial investment. In the national assembly meeting held at the EACPT in Amsterdam (see minutes on page 6-8) two issues were tabled.

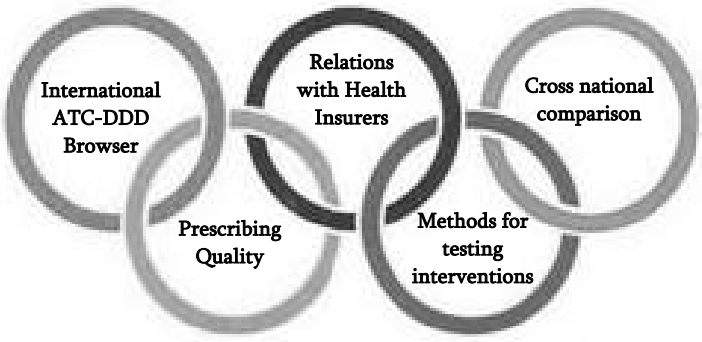
Call for abstracts ICPE 2008 Copenhagen, Denmark
Submit your abstract at: http: //www.call4abstracts.com/ispe
before: February 15, 2008

EuroDURG has a number of dormant members who have been out of contact with the ExCo for a number of years. In addition, numbers of countries were severely behind with their financial contribution. The assembly decided to cancel the memberships of the following countries; Armenia, Bulgaria and Iceland. Special and final financial arrangements were suggested for Spain, Greece and the UK. In addition, the minimal national fee was set at € 25 assuming a minimum of five paying members in a national DUR group.

Peter Mol
Treasurer

ISPE - Special Interest Group Drug Utilization Research (SIG-DUR)

As reported in the 2007 Bulletin, within the ISPE Special Interest Group – Drug Utilization Research (SIG-DUR), five project groups have been formed.



In the last one year three of the five projects have been further developed by working groups with members of several regions in the world. Below we summarized again the backgrounds and the aims of these three projects. We also intended to give updates on recent activities.

1. Project WorkGroup: International ATC/DDD Browser

Robert Vander Stichele, Qasim Al Riyami, Monique Elseviers

The context: Turning raw drug consumption data into information

To be able to produce drug utilization data of large populations, the prescribing, dispensing or consumption of medicinal product packages (MPP) must be identified. In most countries, each medical product package has a national unique identifier number. In large drug utilization monitoring systems, we record for every medicinal product package on the market how many packages have been sold in a given area during a given period. In order to present these data in a condensed and meaningful way, we need to code each medicinal product package into an international classification of medicines, the ATC (Anatomical Therapeutic Chemical Classification) and define its contents in terms of Defined Daily Doses (DDD), depending on the strength of the formulation and the pack size of the package.

The national MPP-ATC-DPP Register

Each countries (and research groups within each country) use a list of the medicinal product packages, their ATC-Code, and the number of DDDs per package (DPP). This list is called the "National MPP-ATC-DPP Register".
Producing such a list requires interpretation and expertise. Correct linking to the ATC and correct calculation of the number of DDDs in a package is essential to produce reliable and comparable drug consumption data.
In the past on several occasions discrepancies have been found in the way different countries link up to ATC or calculate the package content in terms of DDDs.
To limit those discrepancies, and to help those involved in making national registers, it was decided to make a website where researchers could investigate national registers from their own and from other countries. This could help in creating trust in drug utilisation data, and producing comparable data.

The project: A web-based international browser of National Drug Codes (NDCs), linked to the WHO ATC/DDD drug classification.

An initiative was taken by the Special Interest Group on Drug Utilization Research (SIG-DUR) within the International Society of Pharmacoepidemiology (ISPE).

The functional analysis of this web-based application was finished and a prototype is **now freely available on: http://atc.ramit.be**.

On this site, one can inspect the Belgian National Register, and check how the different products are coded in the ATC and what the result of the calculation of the DDD per package was.
We hope to add in the near future the National Register of several countries. Preliminary contacts to provide data for this application have been already made with 5 European countries and 4 countries on other continents.

Invitation to participate

Therefore we invite the national drug utilization research groups to identify in their country which institution is making this National Register in an academic or government setting. Once this institution is identified, it could be invited to deliver the National Register to the SIG-DUR (contact robert.vanderstichele@ugent.be) in a specified format.
Countries wishing to participate should send in a copy of their National MPP-ATC-DDD Register once a year (if possible by February of the year) with all the medicinal products packages on the market in the preceding year, coded to the ATC version of the preceding year. This file would contain the national unique identifier, the label of the package (a descriptive label of less then 80 characters), the ATC-5 code, the ATC-Route of administration, and the Number of DDDs in the package+ the unit in which the DDD is expressed).
A central committee would responsible for receiving and checking the format of these National Registers, and preparing them for exposition on the web. It would be possible to search the ATC in different languages and look at the collections of medicinal product packages of several countries.
In case you are interested in participating in this project, please send an e-mail to the above mentioned address, and we will provide you with more detailed instructions about the format of the information to be provided.
Please take a look at the experimental website mentioned above, to get a feeling of what this important project for the future of Drug Utilization Research is all about.

Robert Vander Stichele
For the project Group
"International ATC Browser"
within the IPSE SIG-DUR.

2. Project WorkGroup: Cross National Comparison

Katrin Jahnsen, Monique Elseviers, Ilse Truter, Vera Vlahović-Palčevski, Hege Salvesen Blix, Matus Ferech, Judith Mackson, Ulf Bergman

The aim of the ISPE SIG-DUR Cross National Collaboration group is to describe the status of the art of drug utilisation research (DUR) and related data collection systems.

The main objectives are: developing international cooperation and common format for presentation. The first incentive is to prepare a dedicated poster session for ICPE 2008 with several country posters with common design. This work group has convened in telephonic meetings to prepare this collective poster-session at the Copenhagen ISPE. Format of the posters has been already elaborated. The collected and presented information will enable us to compare Drug Utilization Monitoring capabilities of countries. We intend to gain information on (a) the DUR organization in each country, (b) the sophistication of DUR data collection in terms of volume and/or expenditures for ambulatory and hospital use, (c) linkage of these data with patient data and prescriber, (d) description of available databases and (e) information concerning prescribing quality indicators used in a country. These information will be collected for each country through a uniformed questionnaire that has been designed for that purpose. It is in the process of distribution to relevant persons in different countries.
This activity was posted as a mid-term objective of the project which will enable achieving the long-term objective: stimulate (a) the worldwide use of WHO indicators of rational drug use, (b) cross-national monitoring programs of use of specific drugs, (c) recording of drug use in cross-national epidemiological disease registers and to enhance (d) comparability of data on drug exposure (volume, expenditures and quality) in international databases.
We invite all interested researchers to take an active part in this project. The more international participants get involved in the project, the more knowledge will be gained.
For collaboration please contact Monique Elseviers, Katrin Janhsen or Vera Vlahović-Palčevski.

Vera Vlahović-Palčevski.
For the project Group "Cross National Comparison" within the IPSE SIG-DUR.

5. Project WorkGroup: Relations with Health Insurers

Ingrid Schubert, Julie Zito, Judith Mackson, Kirstin Myhr, Katrin Janhsen, Shirin Ahmed, Frank May

Long term objective of this project group is to foster the relationships between health insurers and ISPE and to highlight the potential of

sound pharmacoepidemiological practice as a means to gain better value and outcomes from resources committed to pharmacotherapy.

The middle term objective of the project group is approaching: to hold an International Meeting with Health Insurers in 2008. The intention would be to attract a wide range of pharmaceutical and general healthcare cost insurers from around the world.
Such a meeting would be designed to provide a practical view of relevant methodological developments and progress which has been made in the world of research in pharmacoepidemiology and drug utilization research.
The work group (with the strong impetus of Frank May) has already defined the scope and objectives of this forthcoming meeting:

- To share global experience in the management of pharmaceutical claims data, its linkage with other health care costs, and improved public health outcomes.
- To discuss the latest concepts and techniques for improving the assessment of net benefit from expenditures on pharmaceuticals.
- To review methods for positively influencing therapeutic choices made by individual prescribers.

The preliminary program has been discussed, and specialized topics will cover the followings:

- Improved discrimination of individual patient compliance behavior from claims data
- Refinement of propensity score calibrations to help adjust for unmeasured confounding in studies relating drug exposures to outcomes.
- Use of time-trend analysis for evaluation of point strategies to improve pharmaceutical use and value in customary quasi or non-experimental real-life settings.

Potential members for the final program committee have been listed, and the finances and managerial logistic aspects of a 2 and a half day meeting **in Brussels in the Fall of 2008** have been also explored by the working group.
Finally, contacts have been made with Health Insurers organization and the WHO to secure funding and global advertising of this international meeting

In case you are interested to participate, please contact :

Frank May:
FWMAY@PARTNERS.ORG
OR
Robert Vander Stichele :
robert.vanderstichele@ugent.be

Robert Vander Stichele
For the project Group "Health Insurers" within the IPSE SIG-DUR.

Place of SIGs on the ISPE Web site

A meeting was held with the ISPE management team, the Web master of the ISPE website and SIG-DUR to discuss the implications of putting information and dynamic web pages pertaining to Special Interest Groups on the web site. A flexible and affordable method to allow SIGs to place rapidly changing internal information on the web within the framework of rather static ISPE website remains to be found. The technical aspects of putting the ATC Browser on the ISPE website in a members-only section were discussed.

Robert Vander Stichele

DRUID project: Driving under the Influence of Drugs, Alcohol and Medicines

Presently, as already discussed in the chair's message, the EuroDURG is participating in two European projects: the **"DRUID"** - Driving under the Influence of Drugs, Alcohol and Medicines and the **"HAPPY AUDIT"** Health Alliance for Prudent Prescribing, Yield And Use of Anti-microbial Drugs In the Treatment of Respiratory Tract Infections.

Part of the DRUID project is to gather information about the consumption of drugs with central nervous system (side)-effect in the general (non-hospitalized) population in various EU member states. EuroDURG has offered some help to identify national data providers.

HAPPY AUDIT project: Health Alliance for Prudent Prescribing, Yield And Use of Anti-microbial Drugs In the Treatment of Respiratory Tract Infections

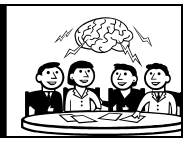
As concern Happy Audit, members of the EuroDURG ExCo were asked to make proposals for registration chart variables and prescribing quality indicators for antibiotic use in primary health care. We accomplished these requests, we were able to come up with many

ideas concerning quality indicators and we conveyed some proposals for registration chart variables also. During the autumn 2007, the management team has finalized the registration chart and has made the standardized translations of project related documents. From six different countries (Denmark, Sweden, Lithuania, Kalingrad, Spain, Argentina) around 500 doctors will participate in the project. The registration period has already started (14 January to 1 February, except Argentina where it will take place in July).

During this 15-day period, patients who visit GP's office and diagnosis of respiratory tract infection is being made will be included. Another inclusion criteria is that patients should consult for the first time with the actual disease and must have not received any antibiotics before. Age, symptoms or signs duration of symptoms/signs, investigations (e.g. Strep A), presumed aetiology, primary diagnosis, prescribed antibiotics, and other details such as penicillin allergy and patient demands will be recorded for each of these contacts. In the first part of 2008, Delphi rounds will be performed to score and chose the best prescribing quality indicators for antibiotics. In this step 2 experts of EuroDURG ExCo (Vera Vlahović-Palčevski. and Robert Vander Stichele) were decided to represent us. Hege Salvesen Blix will represent WHO ATC/DDD centre which also is a partner in Happy Audit.

Ria Benko

Conferences



…Previous conferences

23rd ICPE in Quebec
August 24-27, 2007

Euro-DURG participated in the 23rd International Conference on Pharmacoepidemiology & Therapeutic Risk Management in Quebec in August 2007. For the first time, a special introductory course to drug utilization and health service research was held prior to the conference and gathered about 60 participants. The lecturers Bob Vander Stichele, Morten Andersen, Monique Elseviers and Sebastian Schneeweiss gave a broad insight into important drug utilization topics such as international comparisons of drug utilization, prescribing quality indicators and observational methods for data analyses. The course received a very positive evaluation and its re-organisation is planned next summer in Denmark.

Drug Utilization studies constituted a substantial part of the conference. Three specific sessions were held around drug utilization studies - a symposium on quality indicators and two oral sessions with contributed papers around drug utilization in the elderly and drug utilization studies in general, respectively. The quality indicator symposium aimed to discuss benefits and problems using administrative databases. Aspects on validity and use were covered. The oral sessions consisted of a mixture of studies, e.g. around quality of prescribing to elderly, drug interactions, compliance and various factors influencing drug expenditures and utilization.

Best Poster Award
Laurent Azoulay et al.

A total of 75 posters out of 383 (20%) were classified as Drug utilization studies. Also some posters in other sessions were drug utilization studies. A poster walk of the DUR studies was arranged by Euro-DURG and the scientific poster awards were given to the followings:

1st PRICE: Laurent Azoulay, Canada.: "Isotretinoin therapy and the incidence of acne relapse: a nested case-control study"

2nd PRICE: Anders Sundstrom, Sweden: "'Use of the Swedish Prescribed Drug Register to Assess the Extent of Possible Misuse of Drugs: The example of Tramadol"

3rd PRICE: Meredith Y Smith, US: "Prevalence and Costs of Concomitant Use of Alcohol in Medicaid Patients Dispensed Opioid Analgesics for Chronic Pain"

Congratulation to the winners!

8th Congress of the EACPT 2007
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

The conference had a theme of 'patient-tailored pharmacotherapy' and covered a broad range of topics from drug development, (early) clinical pharmacology to drug utilization and pharmacovigilance The conference was attended by cc. 900 delegates. A number of organizations collaborated with the EACPT, among them ISPE, ISOP, and also EuroDURG had a modest part in this congress.

EuroDURG held a General Assembly during this congress which is summarized in the next point of the bulletin. On the final

morning of the congress a half day session was dedicated to drug utilization research. During the early morning in the 'meet the expert sunrise session' Ton de Boer held a lecture on strategies to improve rational prescribing. Flora Haaijer-Ruskamp and Jesper Hallas closed the morning sessions on the 'core' EuroDURG topic of the last few years; prescribing quality indicators.
A successful novelty was - in my view - that presenters of particularly interesting posters were selected during the poster walks to give a five-minute plenary talk. To make this possible all poster presenters had to pre-submit three slides to support their presentation. A concept that would be worthwhile picking up in the EuroDURG session at the next ISPE conference. All-in-all the 8th EACPT Congress was an interesting conference albeit with a much smaller EuroDURG profile than (even) the Canadian ICPE (see also on page 6).

Peter Mol

General assembly at the EACPT conference

Twenty members or interested people from 11 countries **attended** the meeting: Belgium (2), Denmark (1), The Netherlands (4), Germany (2), Russia (2), Croatia (1), Kosovo (1), Serbia (2), Greece (1), Kazahstan (1), Hungary (1). No members were present from Spain, Sweden, UK, Czech Republic, Norway, Italy, Portugal, and France.

After the welcome speech of the chair, the self-introduction of each attendant and the approval of the agenda Monique Elseviers presented **the EuroDURG activities for 2006-2007.** Teleconferences, attendance to several meetings (mid-year ISPE, ISPE, EACPT), abstract rating activities, communication with national members, website maintenance, publishing of the EuroDURG bulletin and the participation in ongoing European projects (Druid, Happy Audit) were listed as present activities.

As Sylvia Hummel, member of the DRUID management team was also present, she briefly summarized the aims of the project and highlighted that they have not received drug consumption data from 9 out of the 21 participating countries. The list of non-performing countries will be provided to EuroDURG in order to help in obtaining the lacking data.

Ria Benko provided information about the current situation of the Happy Audit project. The next step where EuroDURG will be involved is the development (score and comment) of quality indicators by the Delphi-method. The management team of Happy Audit required 2 experts from the EuroDURG who will consistently participate in each round. Finally Vera Vlahovic and Robert Vander Stichele was decided to represent us. Hege Salvesen Blix will represent WHO ATC/DDD centre which also is a partner in Happy Audit. Further 2 persons: Samuel Coenen and Flora M Haaijer-Ruskamp might be contacted if additional help is necessary.

The next discussion point was the financial situation of EuroDURG
The treasurer, Peter Mol presented the financial report 2006-2007 and the budget for 2007-2008. (see also treasurer's report on page 2-3)

As the transactions are too expensive and the money flow in the Spanish bank account system is untraceable, **the transfer of the bank account** to a Dutch bank was previously suggested by Peter Mol. The Dutch ABN-AMRO bank will provide several advantages, e.g. English electronic banking facilities and free money transfers within Euro countries.
The proposed bank account transfer was approved by all 7 member countries represented at the General Assembly (BE,HR,DK,DE,HU,NL,RU). Peter Mol and Monique Elseviers were appointed and authorized to accomplish the bank account transfer.

As the sole income of the organization is still from national membership fees, the non-active membership of EuroDURG was also discussed. Peter Mol presented that seven countries have not paid their membership fees for several years. A last reminder and invoice was sent by him to Spain, UK, Armenia, Bulgaria, Greece, Iceland and Russia, asking to fulfill financial obligations in the first part of August (reduced fees for the last 5 countries). Russia paid in the meantime. Greece and UK promised to do the same. Spain has no active national DUR group, Emilio Sanze will be considered as an individual Spanish member. Armenia, Iceland and Bulgaria will be removed from the list of EuroDURG members (this has been already carried out as you can see in the National Chair's list on page 11-12).

After the financial matters we came to the scientific point. Robert Vander Stiechele presented **current activities of** the Special Interest Group - Drug Utilization Research (SIG-DUR) of ISPE. Three projects have been already launched out of the 5 project. The ATC-DDD web browser project, the cross-national comparison project, and the health insurer conference project. The prototype of the ATC-DDD web browser has been already worked out and was shown to the attendants of the Genaral Assembly

(more info on SIG-DUR projects can be found on page 3-5)

At last the **future of EuroDURG** was discussed. The chair of EuroDURG, Monique Elseviers evoked the national opinions - registered during the last General Assembly in Lisbon, 2006 - about the future of EuroDURG. She mentioned the prospectives of SIG-DUR and the advantages, disadvantages of merging to ISPE. Katrin Janhsen and Flora M Haaijer-Ruskamp also helped in identifying pros and contras. Monique Elseviers proposed a new idea merging with the SIG-DUR of ISPE as a European DUR coordinating group with certain independent rights (to retain the current web page, carry on European projects, etc.). The final decision will be taken at the ISPE conference, 2008, in Denmark.

Ria Benko

Upcoming conferences…

ISPE 2008 Mid-Year Meeting Boston, US

The 2008 ISPE Mid-Year Meeting will be held at the Radisson Boston, April 27-28. On April 27, the ICPE 2008 Scientiifc Program Committee will meet and two courses - Introduction to Pharmacoepidemiology (morning) and Advanced Topics in Pharmacoepidemiology (afternoon) - will be offered. "Changes at the US Food and Drug Administration: Assessment & Implications for Pharmacoepidemiology" is the theme of the symposium on April 28.

More info: www.pharmacoepi.org

ISPE 2008 annual conference (ICPE) Copenhagen, Denmark

The International Society for Pharmacoepidemiology (ISPE) announces the 24th International Conference on Pharmacoepidemiology & Therapeutic Risk Management (ICPE 2008). This meeting represents an important opportunity to participate in the exchange of timely scientific information from the fields of pharmacoepidemiology, therapeutic risk management, and drug utilization. The diverse audience represents the key stakeholders-pharmaceutical industry, academia, government, contract research organizations, and consulting firms. This meeting is generally acknowledged to be the preeminent global conference on pharmacoepidemiology and therapeutic risk management. The agenda will be a discriminate blend of invited lectures, submitted papers, posters, workshops and symposia - together representing the current state of experience and knowledge in these dynamic disciplines. All abstracts submitted will be published in Pharmacoepidemiology and Drug-Safety, ISPE's official journal.

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

ICPE 2008
Online abstract submission site:
www.call4abstracts.com/ispe
Deadline: February 15, 2008

We invite you to submit an abstract(s) for an oral/poster presentation or for a workshop/symposium for presentation at the 2008 annual meeting. Results that have been published (except in abstract form) before January, 2008 are not eligible for submission. Results that have been presented at meetings of other scientific societies are eligible, provided that they have not been published (except in abstract form) before January 1, 2008.

A limited number of **scholarships** may be available to assist with attendance at ICPE 2008

Deadline: March 17, 2008

CALL FOR READERS

The 2008 Scientific Program Committee invites ISPE members to review abstracts submitted for presentation at the ICPE 2008. If you are interested, please fax a completed questionnaire to Marathon Multimedia (507-334-0014) **by February 1**, 2008

CALL FOR FELLOWS

The ISPE Board of Directors created a special elected category of membership for its outstanding leadership several years ago. Elected members are designated 'ISPE Fellows'. Fellowship Status is awarded upon election as Fellow by the board on the recommendation of a committee of peers (the Fellowship & Awards Committee). Consideration for election to fellowship is open to those who are recognized as having leadership roles in pharmacoepidemiology. The Fellowship and Awards Committee will consider all completed applications received in the ISPE Office **by January 31,** 2008 for Fellow status to be conferred in 2008. The Subcommittee will submit its recommendations to the ISPE Board of Directors for consideration at the Board's Mid-Year Meeting, April 2008. All applications approved for FISPE

status will be inducted at the 2008 Annual Meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark. (The Call for Fellows and the 2008 Application Form are posted in the Members Only section on the webpage.)

More info: www.pharmacoepi.org

ESCP 2008 conference

The European Society of Clinical Pharmacy (ESCP) will organise an international workshop on "the oncological patient and the clinical pharmacist" in Leuven, Belgium, 26-28 May 2008. The program will consist of plenary lectures, round table discussions, interactive workshops, poster sessions, poster discussion forums and oral communications. A whole day will be dedicated to discuss different patient's perspectives (e.g. Quality of Life),
The 37th Annual Symposium will be held in Dubrovnik, Croatia, 22-24 October 2008. Therapeutic Innovations and new Pharmaceutical Care Models will be in the focus of the conference.

More info: www.escpweb.org

EUPHA 2008 conference

In 2008, the annual European Public Health Association – EUPHA - conference will be held from 6 to 8 November in Lisbon, Portugal. The main theme is: "I-Health: health and innovation in Europe". Abstracts can be submitted from 1 February to 1 May 2008

More info: www.eupha.org

NEWS from national DUR groups

German activities in drug utilisation

About 70 persons attended the 14th Annual Conference of the German DURG in Frankfurt am Main, although attendance was hampered by a nationwide strike of the railway services. The lectures and posters this year once again targeted a wide range of research themes on drug utilisation. Over a period of two days, a series of lectures covering four central topics were held, as well as an evening and a poster session.

Quality Assurance and Drug Prescribing constituted the first topic of the conference. In addition to summary presentations on implementation of quality prescribing in the ambulatory care sector, the analysis of medication errors and current concepts were presented. An evening session addressed the topic of different concepts to measure prescribing quality. Research results were presented by colleagues from the University of Groningen (L. Martirosyan, Prof. Haaijer-Ruskamp). The theoretical scientific approaches were contrasted with experiences in decision making of the German Federal Joint Committee (G-BA)

For the topic Drug Utilisation Research, experts provided reports on the current situation regarding drug prescribing following the latest amendments to the German social legislation.

Multimorbidity and Medication comprised a number of research contributions investigating the quality of care provided for chronically ill patients and new approaches to avoid inappropriate prescribing in the elderly.

The abstracts have been published in English in German Medical Science (http://www.egms.de). The 15th conference will take place in Bonn, 20th and 21th November 2008. Guests are cordially welcome; further information is available by our website http://gaa.awmf.info/

A new board has been elected at the 14th. Annual Conference:

Prof. Sebastian Harder (harder@em.uni-frankfurt.de), Dept. Clinical Pharmacology University Hospital Frankfurt am Main

Dr. Jutta Krappweis (j.krappweis@bfarm.de), BfArM, Bonn

Dr. Holger Gothe (GT@iges.de), IGES-Institut Berlin

PD Dr. Marion Hippius (Marion.Hippius@med.uni-jena.de), Dept. Clinical Pharmacology University Hospital Jena

Prof. Gerd Glaeske (buero_glaeske@zes.uni-bremen.de), ZeS, Bremen

Prof. Sebastian Harder
Chair of the GAA eV

Italian activities in drug utilisation

DURG-Italia has been active since 1995 and its early activity mainly consisted in spreading the ATC/DDD methodology for drug utilisation studies. To this purpose DURG-Italia created the Italian ATC/DDD database including all the drugs marketed in Italy. Nowadays, the familiarity of pharmacists and physicians with the main tools of drug utilisation is very high and the role of DURG-Italia mainly consists of providing 6-month updates of the Italian ATC/DDD database to various Health Authorities (National Agency for Medicines, Regional and Local Heath Authorities). DURG-Italia also provides scientific counselling to the Health Authorities for planning and carrying out drug utilisation studies, both in terms of drug statistics and quality indicator analyses.
DURG-Italia is presently involved in planning and organising the 3rd Italian Conference on Pharmacoepidemiology, in collaboration with the Italian Society of Pharmacology and the Emilia Romagna Health Authority. The Conference will take place in Autumn 2008, in Bologna.

Swedish activities in drug utilisation

The Swedish Society for Pharmacoepidemiology, including the Drug utilization group, has around 150 members representing academia, healthcare and the pharmaceutical industry. An educational seminar on pharmacoepidemiological registers and methods was recently arranged in collaboration with a number of Swedish organizations. The seminar started with a number of lectures around various databases to monitor drug utilization and ended with group sessions around certain topics, e.g. using administrative data to assess the quality of prescribing in elderly care or applications of pharmacoepidemiological methods to monitor the introduction of new expensive medicines in healthcare. During the year initiatives have also been taken to establish national networks around certain issues. The first national expert meeting on prescribing quality indicators was arranged in December to implement and adopt the DURQUIM recommendations on terminology, validation and use of quality indicators.

A national register on dispensed pharmaceuticals was established in July 2005. The register contains data with unique patient identifiers for all dispensed prescriptions to the whole population of Sweden (9 million inhabitants). The data collection is administered by the National Corporation of Swedish Pharmacies, a state owned company responsible for the provision of pharmaceutical services in the whole country. Information from all prescriptions dispensed is monthly transferred to the Centre of Epidemiology at the National Board of Health and Welfare, responsible for keeping the register. The register contains data on substance, amount dispensed, dosage, expenditure and reimbursement as well as the age, sex and unique identifier (personal identification number) of the patient. The new register has shown to be a fantastic source for drug utilization studies. A number of studies have been initiated during the year and one Nordic meeting was recently arranged to compare the contents and applications of the data available in the Nordic countries.

We invite other national DUR groups to inform us about their activities!
Please send your summary to monique.elseviers@ua.ac.be

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