

# EuroDURG bulletin

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## EUROPEAN DRUG UTILIZATION RESEARCH GROUP

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*The  
Chair's  
message*



Dear friends,

At the start of this new year, I send you our best wishes for a successful 2009 with fruitful collaborations and research activities in the field of pharmacoepidemiology and drug utilisation research.

2008 was an important year for the EuroDURG family. We expanded to 16 member countries. Internal communication between the members of our executive committee went through the organisation of four teleconferences. The EuroDURG website, two EuroDURG bulletins and letters to national chairs has been used to maintain the communication with national DUR groups. Our activities

concentrated on our involvement in the EC projects 'Happy Audit' (see separate article in this bulletin) and 'Druid' and our collaboration with the ISPE special interest group of drug utilisation research (SIG-DUR). We participated in the abstract review process of the ICPE mid-year meeting in Boston and we were actively involved in the ICPE conference in Copenhagen (August, 2008).

In Copenhagen, EuroDURG contributed to the organisation of a pre-conference educational session devoted to drug utilization research. During this three-hour session, the methodological framework and tools for cross-national comparison were highlighted, validity problems of prescribing quality indicators were handled and the methodology of time trend analysis for program evaluation was presented. As usual, we organized a DUR

poster walk with the selection of the best DUR poster (see further in this bulletin). Additionally, we worked out a special workshop organized as a commented poster session where the result of our Cross National Comparison (CNC) project has been presented (see separate article in this bulletin).

Copenhagen has to be considered as a milestone in the history of EuroDURG. During the EuroDURG General Assembly, a final decision has been taken about the future of EuroDURG. The future of our organization was already thoroughly discussed during the conferences in Bordeaux, Lisbon and Amsterdam. In January 2008, we launched a general proposal, asking the national DUR groups to send us their reactions. We proposed to merge with the Special Interest Group of Drug Utilisation Research (SIGDUR) of ISPE. The vast majority of the representatives of the European DUR countries supported our decision to develop our future activities as the European Network within SIGDUR, taking part in the SIGDUR activities but keeping the autonomy to further develop European initiatives. Moreover, European DUR countries engaged to promote the individual ISPE membership

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and participation in ISPE activities.

The importance of keeping specific European activities was emphasised, with the rights to further engage in European projects, to maintain a European network of DUR researchers with communication via own teleconferences, bulletins, web pages, etc. For the future, the existing EuroDURG approach to communicate through national DUR organisations will be combined with the ISPE approach of individual membership. Therefore, it was suggested to circulate an updated list of email addresses, to communicate from now also with individual DUR researcher in Europe and to bring interested people together for special projects.

It was decided that EuroDURG will be kept as a legal organization for one more year. Consequently, a new executive committee was elected with the special task to wind up EuroDURG as a separate organization during the transition period and to settle the organizational, constitutional and financial situation for the future. Eleven countries voted for elections (Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Italy,

The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Sweden, UK).

The following candidates were elected for the new executive committee:

*Monique Elseviers (Belgium) - Chair*

*Robert Vander Stichele (Belgium) - Liaison with SIG DUR of ISPE*

*Vera Vlahović-Palčevski (Croatia)*

*Katrin Jahnsen (Germany)*

*Ria Benko (Hungary) - Secretary*

*Elisabetta Poluzzi (Italy) - Webmaster*

*Peter Mol (The Netherlands) - Treasurer*

*Vasco Maria (Portugal)*

*Björn Wettermark (Sweden)*

Together with all members of the EuroDURG executive committee, I hope to safely embed our organisation within the SIGDUR of ISPE while respecting our mission "to promote drug utilization research as a means to improve use of drugs by providing a European forum for communication and cooperation between people interested in drug utilization research".

***Monique Elseviers  
Chair of EuroDURG***

*Do you know  
ISPE?*



The International Society for Pharmacoepidemiology (ISPE) is an international organization dedicated to advancing the health of the public by providing a forum for the open exchange of scientific information and for the development of policy; education; and advocacy for the field of pharmacoepidemiology, including pharmacovigilance, drug utilization research, and therapeutic risk management.

The International Society for Pharmacoepidemiology (ISPE) is a non-profit international professional membership organization dedicated to promoting pharmacoepidemiology, the science which applies epidemiologic approaches to studying the use, effectiveness, value and safety of pharmaceuticals. ISPE is firmly committed to providing an unbiased scientific forum to the views of all parties with interests in drug development, drug delivery, drug use, drug costs, and drug effects. ISPE members represent the various scientific disciplines involved in studying drugs.

**Call for abstracts ICPE 2009 Providence, Rhode Island**

**Submit your abstract at: <http://www.call4abstracts.com/ispe>**

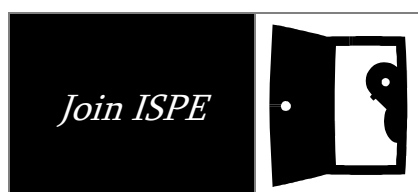
**before: February 16, 2009**

Members are employed by the pharmaceutical industry, academic institutions, government agencies, non-profit and for-profit private organizations. Members have degrees in a number of fields, including epidemiology, biostatistics, medicine, nursing, pharmacology, pharmacy, law, health economics, and journalism.

With members in 53 countries and national chapters in Argentina, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands, ISPE truly provides an international forum for sharing knowledge and scientific approaches to foster the science of pharmacoepidemiology.

ISPE sponsors conferences and seminars, a quarterly newsletter, and an official journal — *Pharmacoepidemiology and Drug Safety* — published by Wiley.

For further information see <http://www.pharmacoepi.org/>



### Individual Membership

Different categories of individual membership can be distinguished:

- Individual Member (annual fee of 230 US dollars)
- Fellow
- Retired Member
- Special Member (annual fee of 25 US dollars, for inhabitants of middle or lower income country as identified by the United Nations (UN Human

Development Report 2005, page 364)

- Student Member (with proof of registration in a fulltime graduate, post-graduate, or undergraduate program)

While registering as a member of ISPE, do not forget to mark on the membership application that you are interested to join the Special Interest group of Drug Utilisation/ Health Service Research

*Monique Elseviers*  
*Chair of EuroDURG*



*...Previous  
conferences*

**24<sup>th</sup> ICPE in Copenhagen  
August 16-20, 2008**

As you can read in the chair's message, EuroDURG contributed a lot to the successfulness of the annual ISPE conference in Copenhagen. As a tradition, EuroDURG ExCo has organized its poster competition. Studies were previously classified as 'drug utilization research' according to their submitted abstracts. The authors of the drug utilization research works were invited to give a short oral presentation in front of their posters. The EuroDURG ExCo gave the scientific poster awards to the following authors:

#### **1<sup>st</sup> PRICE:**

Annette de Thurah, Mette Noergaard, Martin B. Johnson, Kristian Stengaard-Petersen. (DENMARK): "Refill Adherence to Methotrexate among Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis in the county of Aarhus, Denmark"

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> PRICE:**

Judith P Kelly, David W Kaufman, Louis Vernacchio, Katherine Kelley, Allen A. Mitchell. (UNITED STATES): "Are parents a Reliable Source of Information on Adolescent Medication Use?"

#### **3<sup>rd</sup> PRICE:**

Marina Maggini, Roberto Da Cas, Stefania Spila-Alegiani, Roberto Raschetti, OsMed study group. (ITALY): "Antidiabetic Drug Use in Italy"

*Congratulation to the winners!*

*Upcoming  
conferences...*

**ISPE 2009 Mid-Year  
Meeting  
Stockholm, Sweden**

The 2009 Mid-Year meeting of the International Society for Pharmacoepidemiology (ISPE) will be held in Stockholm, Sweden 25-27 April (ISPE Board meeting on April 25, pre-symposium courses on April 26; Scientific Program Committee meeting on April 26). The year 2009 marks 25 years since the first International Conference on Pharmacoepidemiology (ICPE) was organized in

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA.

The 10th ICPE marked the first time the ICPE was organized jointly with EuroDURG in Stockholm in 1994 (*The History of the Drug Utilization Research Group in Europe*. *Pharmacoepidemiology and Drug Safety* 2006; 15: 95-98).

The 2009 ISPE Mid-Year Scientific symposium on Monday April 27 will recognize the historical development in pharmacovigilance and pharmacoepidemiology with the preliminary title: ***From thalidomide to pharmacovigilance to pharmacoepidemiology, has drug safety and effectiveness really improved since thalidomide?*** The symposium will be held at the Karolinska University Hospital, Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm.

The morning session will be devoted to the historical background of surveillance systems initiated after the thalidomide disaster in the early 1960s. It will focus on the state of the art for assuring pregnancy safety, including pregnancy registries, case-control surveillance studies, and registers of medical births and congenital malformations (which started in Sweden in the Mid-1960s). For the non-pregnant population, it will focus on spontaneous reporting and other systems developed post-thalidomide,

including the WHO-CC in Uppsala, which gathers data on adverse drug reactions from more than 90 countries. Antibiotic resistance - a missing link in pharmacovigilance and the new European initiative in drug safety research, EMEA - and ENCePP will illustrate the state of the art of pharmacovigilance and pharmacoepidemiology.

The afternoon will be devoted to a relatively new and highly relevant area of pharmacoepidemiology, Comparative Effectiveness Research (CER). The methodological challenges in CER will be critically evaluated: Will non-randomized studies on the comparative effectiveness of medications and devices ever reach the necessary level of credibility for decision makers? What are promising methodological advances that can help CER?

What can ISPE contribute to CER and its development?

Confirmed speakers are: **Barbro Westerholm**, Professor emeritus and Member of the Swedish parliament; **Allen Mitchell**, Professor, Boston University, Boston, USA; **Ralph Edwards**, Professor, WHO, Uppsala; **Otto Cars**, Professor, Swedish Strategic Programme Against Antibiotic Resistance; **Sebastian Schneeweiss**, ISPE President Elect, Harvard, Boston, USA;

**Jerry Avorn**, Professor, Harvard, Boston, USA; **Miriam CJM Sturkenboom**, ISPE President, Professor, Erasmus University Medical Centre, Rotterdam, The Netherlands  
The Mid-Year Symposium is jointly sponsored by the International Society for Pharmacoepidemiology (ISPE), the Swedish Society for Pharmacoepidemiology (SLEF) and the Centre for Pharmacoepidemiology at Karolinska Institutet. For more information about the symposium, the pre-symposium courses, and the meeting, please visit the ISPE website (<http://www.pharmacoepi.org>).

Welcome to Stockholm in April!

*Ulf Bergman and Björn Wettermark*  
**ISPE and Swedish Society for Pharmacoepidemiology**

ISPE 2009 annual  
conference (ICPE)  
Providence, Rhode  
Island

EuroDURGers and all people interested in pharmacoepidemiology are cordially invited to attend the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary International Conference on Pharmacoepidemiology and Therapeutic Risk Management.

ICPE Celebrates 25 years at Mid-Year meeting in  
Stockholm, Sweden  
April 25-27, 2009



The meeting will be held August 16-19, 2009 at the Rhode Island Convention Centre, Providence, Rhode Island. Further information about the scientific program soon will be uploaded to the ISPE website (<http://www.pharmacoepi.org>) Meeting, hotel and registration information can be also found there.

*Ria Benko*

Visit the ISPE website at:  
[www.pharmacoepi.org](http://www.pharmacoepi.org)

## EACPT 2009 Edinburgh, Scotland

The next Congress of the European Association for Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics will be held in the Edinburgh from 12th to 15th July, 2009. Three parallel sessions will be organized to convey the latest scientific evidence available in the field of drug discovery, therapeutics of cardiovascular, central nervous system diseases and cancer. Lectures on the pharmacotherapy of special patient populations (elderly, ICU patients) and pharmacoepidemiology are also included in the programme. For the conference submit your abstract at: [www.abstractserver.com/eacpt2009/absmgm/](http://www.abstractserver.com/eacpt2009/absmgm/) before the 28<sup>th</sup> of February, 2009. For further information and for downloading the preliminary program visit the following website: [www.eacpt2009.org/](http://www.eacpt2009.org/)

## Update on the Happy Audit Project



The overall aim of the European "HAPPY AUDIT" project and its intervention programme is to reduce the occurrence of bacterial resistance by reducing prescribing of unnecessary antibiotics for respiratory tract infections and by improving the use of appropriate antibiotics in suspected bacterial infections. The project started in 2007 April and six countries are participating: Denmark, Sweden, Spain, Russia, Lithuania, and Argentina. EuroDURG is a partner in the project participating in the steering committee meetings and providing expert opinion where needed. The year 2008 was very busy for the project.

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

During a 3-week registration period (January and February 2008, except Argentina: June and July 2008) participating GPs (N=618) registered all patients with respiratory tract infections. More than 30,000 patient contacts were registered. With this high number, it is probably until now the largest study in a primary health care setting involving so

many GPs from so many different countries.

In order to find the best prescribing quality indicators a modified 2-round Delphi study was conducted from April to July 2008 including a panel of 27 experts from 13 countries. From EuroDURG ExCo Vera Vlahović-Palčevski and Robert Vander Stichele participated. Finally 41 quality indicators were developed, 14 of them concerned "treatment" and 27 concerned the "antibiotic choice".

Intervention programs targeting GPs focusing on how to improve the quality of care for patients with respiratory tract infections (RTI) have been developed and implemented: reports including individual feedback for each of the participating GPs have been produced and distributed. All participating GPs were invited to follow-up meetings, and by means of group work we have focused on potential room for improvement of the diagnostics and treatment of patients with RTI. Furthermore, the project has developed a set of evidence-based guidelines on RTIs.

With a Swedish partner, a set of patient information leaflets and posters for waiting rooms has been worked out. This patient information campaign started 18 November 2008, on the European Antibiotic Awareness Day. All of these have been locally adapted and translated into national language for each of the participating countries.

Finally a program for the implementation of point-of-care testing (measurement of C-reactive protein (CRP) and

Streptococci-A antigen test (StrepA) in general practice has been developed.

In January and February 2009 a second registration period will take place (except in Argentina where the intervention program will be implemented during the spring of 2009 and the second registration will take place during June-July 2009.). Oral communication disseminating the results from the Happy Audit project will be presented at the Nordic Congress of General Practice to be held in Copenhagen 13-16 May 2009, and the management team will ask for a HAPPY AUDIT symposium at the next European WONCA congress to be held in Basel 16-19 September 2009. The next steering group meeting will be held in Lithuania 29-30 May 2009.

*Ria Benko*

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

As reported in the Bulletin two years ago, within the ISPE the Special Interest Group - Drug Utilization Research (SIG-DUR) have been formed.

Summary and updates on two SIG-DUR projects with special involvement and contribution of some ExCo members are presented here:

#### Update on the ATC browser

The Special Interest Group on Drug Utilization of ISPE has a project to create a web application to browse therapeutic arsenals from different countries, using the ATC classification. We try to locate the scientific team in each country, who is responsible for allocating ATC codes and for calculating the number of DDDs in the available medicinal product packages in the country, identified by the local unique identifying number. We ask this team to transform the national data into a predefined format and to send the updates once a year to a central web master, who will then enter these national data into an international system. The aim of the project is to assist in cross validation of classification of drugs in different countries, to facilitate cross national comparison of therapeutic arsenals, and to help research teams in other countries to construct valid links between national drug databases and the international classification ATC/DDD.

The first phase of the project (visible at <http://atc.ramit.be/>) has been completed with 3 consecutive years of Belgium.

The second phase (to be ready for next ICPE in August 2009) will include data from several countries (at least 4) and several years. Funding of the project to

assure its future maintenance has been found in the Heymans Institute of Pharmacology (University of Gent, Belgium). Research projects focussing on methods to study and compare the extent of national therapeutic arsenals will be developed. Interested researchers can contact [robert.vanderstichele@ugent.be](mailto:robert.vanderstichele@ugent.be)

**Robert Vander Stichele**

*For the project Group "International ATC-DDD Browser" within the IPSE SIG-DUR*

#### ISPE SIG-DUR Report of the Cross National Collaboration Survey

Today, in the era of globalization, the significance of cross-national comparison of drug utilization is growing. However, up until now, little was known on the ability to collect drug consumption data, on the sophistication of national drug utilization monitoring systems, and the possibility to make valid, comprehensive international comparison of drug utilization. The aim of this survey was to collect as much information as possible about the state of the art of drug utilization research (DUR) and to obtain drug consumption data for some selected drugs in different countries by using a structured questionnaire designed for the study and performed by the members of the EuroDURG and ISPE SIG-DUR.

We received responses and filled questionnaires from 24 countries!

Results were presented in a dedicated poster session at the ICPE in Copenhagen in August 2008. Within the special poster session we were able to present 24 commonly designed posters, one for each participating country and three additional posters summarizing all the results. The information collected and presented included details on the organization of DUR in individual countries, the sophistication of DUR data collection in terms of volume and/or expenditures for ambulatory and hospital use, linkage of these data with patient data and prescriber,

description of available databases and information concerning prescribing quality indicators used in a country.

Requested drug utilization (DU) data for certain drugs were delivered by 14 countries (figure 1, table 1) within the limited time period. The project demonstrated high variability in sophistication of available DUR data, limiting possibilities for international comparison of drug consumption.

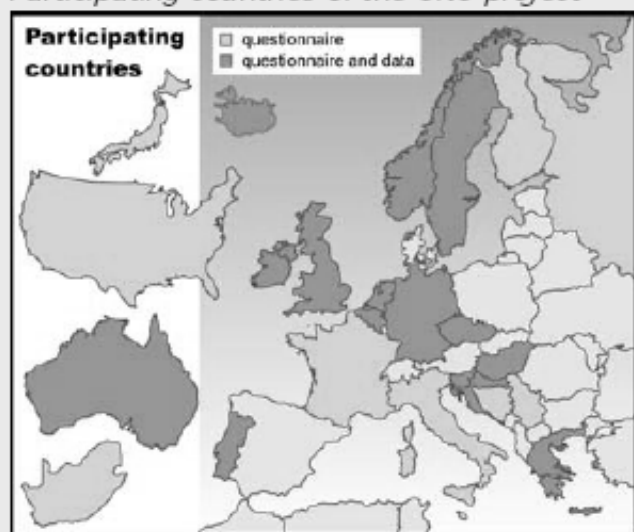
We hope that this survey will stimulate development of international cooperation in this field, worldwide use of WHO indicators of rational

drug use, cross-national monitoring programs of use of specific drugs, recording of drug use in cross-national epidemiological disease registers and enhanced comparability of data on drug use in international databases. Since all participants were interested to take part in future international DUR projects, we plan to continue after validating the questionnaire and its results!

*Vera Vlahović-Palčevski*

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
COLLABORATION!**

Figure 1, Table 1:  
Participating countries of the CNC project



Country	Abbr.	Surface 1000km <sup>2</sup>	Population millions	Questionnaire	DUR data
Australia	AU	7741	20.6	X	
Belgium	BE	30	10.4	X	X
Bosnia	BA	51	4.6	X	
Croatia	HR	56	4.5	X	X
Czech Republic	CZ	79	10.2	X	X
Finland	FI	338	5.1	X	
France	FR	547	60.8	X	
Germany	DE	357	82.4	X	X
Greece	GR	132	10.7	X	X
Hungary	HU	93	9.9	X	X
Iceland	IS	103	0.3	X	
Ireland	IR	70	4.2	X	X
Italy	IT	301	58.1	X	
Japan	JP	378	127.3	X	
Netherlands	NL	41	16.6	X	X
Norway	NO	385	4.6	X	X
Russia	RU	17075	140.0	X	X
Portugal	PT	92	10.6	X	X
Serbia	RS	77	10.5	X	
Slovenia	SI	20	2.0	X	X
South Africa	ZA	1220	43.8	X	
Sweden	SE	450	9.0	X	X
UK	UK	243	60.9	X	X
USA	US	9629	303.8	X	

**Participants in alphabetical order of the country:**

Judith Mackson, Maxine Robinson (Australia), Monique Elseviers, Robert Vander Stichele (Belgium), Begler Begovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Viola Macolic Sarinic, Pero Draganic, Sasa Zezelic, Vera Vlahovic Palcevski, Suzana Ostarcevic, Sinisa Tomic (Croatia), Petr Dvorak, Karel Urbanek, Lydie Liskova, Marie Visnovska (Czech Republic), Jaana Martikainen (Finland), Eric Van Ganse (France), Katrin Janhsen, Ingrid Schubert (Germany), Paraskevi Papaioannidou (Greece), Ria Benko, Maria Matuz (Hungary), Anna Almarsdóttir, Helga Zoëga (Iceland), Lesley Tilson, Kathlene Bennett (Ireland), Alberto Vaccheri (Italy), Junichi Kawakami (Japan), Toine Egberts, Peter Mol (The Netherlands), Hege Salvesen Blix, Ingeborg Buajordet (Norway), Vasco Maria, Paula Martins, Mafalda Ribeirinho (Portugal), Svetlana Ratchina (Russia), Ana Sabo, Zdenko Tomic (Serbia), Silva Pecar-Cad (Slovenia), Ilse Truter (South Africa), Björn Wettermark, Anders Ekedahl, Ulf Bergman (Sweden), Steve Chapman (United Kingdom), Julie Zito (USA).

### *News from national DURGs - Germany*

About 100 persons attended the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the German DURG in Bonn (site of venue: Bundesinstitut für Arzneimittel und Medizinprodukte, BfArM). 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 6 lectures and altogether 14 presentation of own research data covering four central topics were held, as well as a poster session comprising 10 posters. This year the conference had its special focus on pharmacovigilance and risk mitigation. Other main topics were "integration of primary and secondary data" and "polypharmacy and multimorbidity". The abstracts have been published in English in *German Medical Science* (<http://www.egms.de/en/meetings/gaa2008/>). The 16th conference will take place in Berlin, 19th and 20th November 2009. Guests are cordially welcome; further information is available at our newly launched website (<http://www.gaa-arzneiforschung.de>).

*Prof. Sebastian Harder  
Chair of the GAA eV*

**We invite other national DUR groups to inform us about their activities!**

Please send your summary to [monique.elseviers@ua.ac.be](mailto:monique.elseviers@ua.ac.be)

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