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International Society for Complementary Medicine Research

New Benefits for ISCMR Members

Dr George Lewith

As you know, when we started out last November, we set as one of our main purposes to communicate at an international level about research. One of the things that we hoped to do was make available several journals at discounts and we have managed to achieve this for all our members. The *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* will be available at $59 US per annum on an online basis. *FACT* offers an introductory subscription to our founding members at the rate of £49 (sterling) in the UK and £75 (sterling) outside the UK. We are also in the process of negotiating a contract with another journal. We would also like to let you all know about the free open access web-based journal *eCAM*. If you want to look at it, go to www3.oup.co.uk/jnls/list/ecam/scope.html. We have very deliberately decided not to have a particular academic journal for the Society. We believe that this means that in our "un-aligned status" we can deliver to you, the members, a much broader based service with far less potential for conflict of interest. You will soon receive complete details of how you can take advantage of these discounts.

As you will see from the article on the website, we have been very fortunate in receiving quite substantial charitable support so that we can build this website while still maintaining a positive credit balance as a consequence of your membership fees. We hope to have this website up and running over the summer and really want you to use it. We would like you to use it to communicate with each other, see the Minutes of Board meetings, Bylaws, etc and, if you wish, to formulate plans for special interest groups. The membership database on the website should allow you to find out about others with similar interests so that you can be better equipped to pursue your research. We have very clearly adopted a policy, in line with our publication policy, of not taking any commercial advertisements on the website.

We are in the process of trying to approach all the various conference organisers around the world in order to ask them for discounts for ISCMR members. We hope that you will benefit through these discounts and we also hope that the conferences will as well, by increased attendance.

Your Executive Committee and Board Members have tried to lay the foundations for international research cooperation within this new and exciting field. We have tried to make sure that information flow can be organised as cheaply and effectively as possible through the Society, and we have tried to spend your pennies wisely to facilitate that. At the 11th Annual Symposium on Complementary Health Care to be held in Exeter, UK on 17-19 November, 2004, we will be having a Board Meeting and also an Annual General Meeting. Details of this will be made available to you all on our website and through the Newsletter.

ISCMR Website: Coming up soon!

Dr. Marja Verhoef

Website development is progressing well. In early May, the Lotte & John Hecht Memorial Foundation (Vancouver, Canada) announced that they would provide financial assistance for the development of a modest web site. We are currently working with a web site developer on logo and web pages design. In addition to providing information about the nature, purpose, goals and activities of ISCMR, one of the major features is a membership database.

This database is for members only and it is password protected. When registering you will be asked to respond to a number of questions, including country of residence, research expertise, areas of interest and whether you are primarily a researcher, clinician, educator, administrator, policy analyst or student. This database allows you to search for other members with similar interests both in your locality and throughout our membership. It also allows the database administrator to create monthly or annual reports about number and type of members. There will be an option that allows you not to be included in the database if you prefer, and yes, there will be online assistance if you forget your password!

With your help we hope to post upcoming national and international events and publications of interest. We will take it upon ourselves to advertise all conferences that are primarily research-based, free. We also will provide space for international interest groups

on topics of interest for our members. Similarly, international research projects may develop based on broad collaboration of ISCMR members. If they fit with ISCMR's goals, we will post them on our ISCMR Research Project Page. Anyone interested assisting us with the establishment of the events calendar, publications of interest, the interest group, or the research project page; please contact Marja Verhoef (mverhoef@ucalgary.ca).

ISCMR Research

While ISCMR as a Society is not necessarily in the business of conducting research, we certainly hope that ISCMR can facilitate or suggest international CAM research that will be relevant to its members. Below Dr. Suzanna Zick describes such a project initiated by an international research team. The group invites you to participate in developing a standardized list of CAM therapies.

Defining a Core List of CAM

Dr. Suzanna Zick

Measurement of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) use is difficult due to the problems with defining which therapies and modalities should be included for consideration. Prevalence and incidence estimates of CAM use have become difficult to interpret and compare across studies. A group of researchers from the US, UK and Canada are proposing that together we define a core list of CAM that can be used for measuring prevalence. To help define a core list of CAM we would like to use a Delphi process among ISCMR members. For those of you not familiar with the Delphi process it is a method where a group of experts in a field mutually consider and decide upon a common idea. Consequently, this is an opportunity to use the expertise within our membership to advance the methods used within CAM research.

The goal is to create a standardized list of CAM therapies presently in use in Western countries. This list is not meant to be comprehensive or disease-specific, but rather a core of items that we can agree to use as a baseline for future measurements to allow for more direct comparisons and increased understanding of CAM use. Individual researchers could add to this list for their own purposes, but would also agree to report prevalence and incidence for the agreed-upon core. Each ISCMR member would receive a packet in the mail consisting of a list of CAM therapies/ modalities, which he or she will mark if that CAM should be included as a core therapy. There will also be ample space to add a CAM that is not in the list as well as other useful feedback about the process. All of these responses will be compiled and a master list created which will then be re-circulated for a next round of comments. Once everyone is satisfied (or at least can live with the list), it can be used to create a core CAM survey.

Please watch for the first list, which will be mailed or emailed to you in the Fall!

Networks

In this Newsletter, Dr. Dieter Melchart describes how German researchers and physicians interested in CAM research have come together in a network to coordinate their efforts and promote CAM research. We hope that it will be helpful for ISCMR members to see how different countries are trying to establish the field of Complementary Medicine Research. In upcoming Newsletters we will report about models in other countries. This may encourage countries that do not yet have such models to start thinking about what might work in their particular context. We also hope that the members of national networks, forums and research groups will be interested in joining ISCMR so that collaboration and networking can be expanded at an international level.

The Forum of Initiatives for Natural Healing Procedures and Complementary Medicine at Universities in German-Speaking Countries

Dr Dieter Melchart

The Forum of Initiatives for Natural Healing Procedures and Complementary Medicine (Forum universitärer Arbeitsgruppen für Naturheilverfahren und Komplementärmedizin) is a network of researchers and physicians who work in the area of natural healing and complementary medicine at universities in German-speaking countries (Austria, Germany, and Switzerland). Our objective is to promote scientific research, academic teaching and the clinical use of natural and complementary intervention for diagnosis, disease prevention and therapy.

The Forum enables exchange and cooperation between academic health care professionals and

researchers within an informally structured network. The Forum aims to integrate aspects of natural healing procedures and complementary medicine into academic medicine and stimulate critical and scientific discussion based on evidence. The members of the Forum are actively involved in research involving natural medicine on effectiveness, efficiency, safety and mechanisms of action.

The Forum is open to scientific research on all natural healing procedures and complementary therapies. Emphasis is put on diagnostic and therapeutic interventions which are widely used by patients in our medical systems and/or for which there is already preliminary evidence for effectiveness or a plausible mechanism of action. Examples of such methods are: Classical natural healing procedures, physical therapies, homeopathy, anthroposophical medicine, traditional Chinese medicine including acupuncture and herbal medicine, chiropractic, osteopathy and neural therapy.

Currently the Forum includes about 90 individuals from more 20 universities including the most active and productive relevant research groups from German-language countries in this field. The Forum meets twice a year hosted by a member group and is represented by a steering committee.

Current members of the steering group are:

- Dr.med. Benno Brinkhaus, Institut für Sozialmedizin, Epidemiologie und Gesundheitsökonomie der Charité Berlin (benno.brinkhaus@charite.de)
- Dr.med. Roman Huber, Medizinische Universitätsklinik, Abt. Innere Medizin, Freiburg, (rhuber@med1.ukl.uni-freiburg.de)
- PD Dr. med. Dieter Melchart, Zentrum für Naturheilkundliche Forschung, II. Med. Klinik und Poliklinik, TU München (dieter.melchart@lrz.tu-muenchen.de)
- Dr. Susanne Moebus, Institut für Medizinische Informatik, Biometrie, Universität Essen, (susanne.moebus@medizin.uni-essen.de)
- Dr.med. Rainer Stange, Immanuel-Krankenhaus, Abteilung für Naturheilkunde, Berlin (r.stange@dgn.de)

For further information, please contact Dr Dieter Melchart (dieter.melchart@lrz.tu-muenchen.de).

Forthcoming Meetings

If you know about any upcoming research focused meetings that are not listed here, please send them to swarber@umich.edu and they will be added.

8-11 September, 2004. Washington State Convention & Trade Center, Seattle, WA

American Association of Naturopathic Physicians (AANP) AANP 19th Annual Convention & Exposition. http://www.naturopathic.org/convention

27 September, 2004. Vienna. CAM in the 7th European Framework. Contact Dr Bettina Reiter: reiter@gamed.or.at

8-10 October, 2004. Waterville Valley Conference Center, Waterville Valley, New Hampshire. Herbal Medicine: Spirit and Science. American Herbalists Guild's 15th Annual Symposium. Pre-conference intensives will be held on October 7. Post-conference clinical intensive will be held on October 11-12. For information contact: ahgoffice@earthlink.net. Website: www.americanherbalist.com

6-8 November, 2004. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Integrated Chronic Disease Prevention: Getting it Together. To register or for more information: www.cdpac.ca

17-19 November, 2004. 11th Annual Symposium on Complementary Health Care. Exeter, UK. Contact: Barbara Wider: B.Wider@exeter.ac.uk www.exeter.ac.uk/FACT/sympo

26 November, 2004. Southampton, UK. Critical Appraisal – An Introduction to Research. Contact: compmed@soton.ac.uk

4-5 December, 2004. Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The Canadian Interdisciplinary Network for Complementary and Alternative Medicine Research (IN-CAM) is hosting its First Annual Symposium. The symposium theme is 'Increasing CAM research capacity and networking in Canada'. Please see the IN-CAM website (www.incamresearch.ca) for more information.

28 April, 2005. Southampton, UK. Developing Research Strategies. Contact: compmed@soton.ac.uk