

Three-year EU FP7 funded CAMbrella project concludes

A three-year pan-European collaboration research project on Complementary and Alternative Medicine funded with 1.5 million euros from the EU's FP7 research budget held its final conference in Brussels, Belgium on 29 November 2012. The one-day conference was held in the impressive premises of the Bavarian Representation next to the European Parliament. The CAMbrella 'family' of researchers and Advisory Board members was photographed in the grounds at lunchtime. (ECCH's representative Stephen Gordon is centre-photo)



The conference audience heard presentations from representatives of each of the 8 work packages. Work package themes were: 1) Terminology and definitions of CAM methods 2) Legal status and regulations 3)

Needs and attitudes of citizens 4) CAM use – the patients' perspective 5) CAM use – the providers' perspective 6) The global perspective 7) The Roadmap for CAM research in Europe 8) Communication and dissemination.

The speakers highlighted among other things:

- the high level of use of CAM by European citizens
- the significant numbers of CAM practitioners and CAM doctors in practice throughout Europe
- the completely unharmonised way in which CAM education and registration is regulated throughout Europe
- the urgent need for investment in research in an area of healthcare with such high citizen use

The leader and coordinator of the CAMbrella project Dr. Wolfgang Weidenhammer of Munich stated in his closing speech to the conference "Citizens are the driver for the use of CAM. Their needs and views are a key priority and their interests must be investigated in future CAM research"

Following the 'kick-off' meeting in January 2010 thousands of hours of research, writing and consultation has gone into producing the final work package reports. The reports create a basis of knowledge from which to develop a recommended programme of research into CAM in order to establish its potential contribution to the healthcare of Europe's citizens. The key report is that of work package 7 which sets out a recommended roadmap for future research in CAM in Europe. Among its recommendations is to establish a European CAM Research Centre. ECCH is very happy to have served as an active member of the CAMbrella Advisory Board, contributing data and perspective on the practice of homeopathy in Europe.

Copies of the conference presentations and a journal article summarizing the project's findings can be accessed here: <http://www.cambrella.eu/documents> (NB: final work package documents are in the process of being agreed and scrutinized by the EU Commission so are not all available for immediate access)

Announcing an International Conference on Research in Homeopathy CUTTING EDGE RESEARCH IN HOMEOPATHY



Venue: Barcelona, Spain

Dates: 31 May – 2 June 2013

A two and a half day conference dedicated to the latest developments in basic, epidemiological and clinical research in homeopathy.

Confirmed speakers already include: Dr Gustavo Bracho (Cuba), Dr Stephan Baumgartner (Switzerland), Dr Iris Bell (USA), Prof Chris Endler (Austria), Dr Peter Fisher (UK), Prof Sandra Mazzoli (Italy) Dr Elio Rossi (Italy) and Dr Elizabeth Thompson (UK)

For further information and to register go to: <http://www.hribarcelona2013.org/>

Conference Reports

Landmark conference on CAM takes place in the European Parliament

On 9 October 2012 an all day conference entitled 'Complementary and Alternative Medicine - Innovation and Added Value for European Healthcare' took place in the European Parliament Buildings in the heart of Brussels. Sponsored by three progressive MEPs, Oana Antonescu, Sirpa Pietikäinen and Alojz Peterle the highly qualified conference speakers presented a clear evidence backed rationale for why CAM should become more integrated into EU member state healthcare systems in the near future. ECCH, together with other participants in the stakeholder group EUROCAM, played an active role in preparing, funding and running this conference. The conference is one part of a wider programme of activity aimed at raising awareness of the relevance of CAM with the European institutions at a time when 'healthy aging', chronic diseases and anti-microbial resistance are key issues on the EU's public health agenda.



A short report containing the conference declaration and a list of speakers with access to copies of their presentations is available on the web-site of the European Public Health Alliance here: <http://epha.org/a/5387> A pdf of the special report produced for the conference 'Complementary and Alternative Medicine - current status and potential in European Healthcare' is available here: eu.cam.booklet.pdf

2012 JPHMA Conference, Tokyo Japan 'Homeopathy is meta-science'

The 13th Congress of the Japanese Homeopathic Medical Association (JPHMA) was held on 29 & 30 September 2012. The theme was 'Homeopathy is meta-science – 'what is essential is invisible to the eye' the Little Prince' There were over 1,000 participants over the 2 days.

Japanese professional homeopaths who have learned the 'Zen method' of homeopathy with Torako Yui chairperson of JPHMA, presented their successful cases demonstrating how patients' self-healing powers are stimulated by homeopathic prescriptions. Meta-scientists who study energy matters, a free energy researcher, natural agriculture farmers, parents who use homeopathy to protect their families and other users also presented at the congress. Including the experiences of users who use homeopathy in their daily lives helps create a wider sense of unity among the Japanese public and with the profession.

One of meta-scientists who shared their experience was Dr Takahashi, an engineer who has been studying 'nanobubbles' for some time. He spoke of the connection of nanobubbles with the field of high dilution effects in homeopathy. To add to this, Dr Kawada shared insights from the sub-atomic world using images from an electron microscope, outlining that in his observation, this is the realm in which homeopathy's high dilutions are understandable.

The head of the conference, Torako Yui JPHMA chairperson, gave a presentation on 'natural farming' on the first day. She explained how important it is to eat vegetables full of 'qi', grown from self-collected seeds and free from pesticides. She presented her ongoing research on treating radio-active soil using fermented active plant liquids together with homeopathic radiation remedies. A farmer in the tsunami-struck Fukushima area reported that he used this approach for 60 days and as a result the radiation levels in his soil significantly decreased.

On the 2nd day, the presentation theme was 'Helped by invisible matters...Difficult cases'. Torako Yui lead the presentations showing how modern intractable diseases with complicated pathology (multiple sclerosis, autism, connective tissue diseases, etc.) can be treated rapidly using her 'Zen method', i.e. combining homeopathy with advice and counselling to patients on how to heal their own inner child and make lifestyle changes.

First Joint German-Japanese conference held

To celebrate the 222nd anniversary of the birth of homeopathy JPHMA was instrumental in organising a joint German - Japanese homeopathy conference on 10-12 November 2012 in Pforzheim, Germany. JPHMA's President Torako Yui presented her 'Zen method' of homeopathy to German homeopaths who showed a high level of interest. Successful cases were presented where homeopathic treatment was backed by the homeopath supporting patients in making positive lifestyle changes as part of the treatment package. The conference ended with an enthusiastic call to hold another joint event in a few years time.



Meanwhile JPHMA is already in discussions on arranging a joint India - Japan international conference next September. As things stand at the moment it will be held in either Delhi or Jaipur.

Research

Rubbish in - rubbish out

The title above is commonly used in the computer world to mean that if you feed in poor data you will get poor results. The saying can equally be used to describe a recently published research paper that purports to systematically analyse the existing literature on 'adverse effects' of homeopathy.

The paper by P. Posadski, A. Alotaibi & E. Ernst is published in the **International Journal of Clinical Practice** and entitled "**Adverse effects of homeopathy: a systematic review of published case reports and case series**". In this paper the authors claim to 'critically evaluate' the evidence for the adverse effects (AEs) of homeopathy. To do this they searched 5 online data-bases plus files at the Peninsula School of Medicine. Out of these they identified just 38 reports that met their inclusion criteria of which they claim 30 pertained to direct AE of homeopathic treatment and 8 were related to AEs caused by substitution of conventional medicine with homeopathy. The total number of patients they claim experienced AEs were 1159, the reactions ranging from mild to severe and including 4 fatalities. On the basis of their research they state " Homeopathy has the potential to harm patients and consumers in both direct and indirect ways. Clinicians should be aware of its risks and advise their patients accordingly'

It is difficult to know where to start in criticising this paper there is so much to criticise about it. The authors do not show evidence of understanding homeopathic practice or of what constitutes a homeopathic remedy and neither do they appear to understand what constitutes a clear relation of causality of effect linked to a given treatment, despite clear criteria having been determined by WHO. Many of the cases quoted are not treated with homeopathic medicines but mistakenly identified with herbal or other low concentration substances, including some toxic materials such as arsenic that do not qualify as 'homeopathic' in form, in other cases the concentration of the substance is not clearly defined. Other cases are to do with the use of injections or ointments and can neither be defined as homeopathic treatment or use of homeopathic medicines. Some cases involve patients taking other forms of treatment concurrently with any identified homeopathic treatment and any conclusion as to what exactly caused an adverse reaction is highly questionable.

Further to the above, in the discussion section of the paper the authors make reference to ECCH's own paper entitled "The Safety of Homeopathy" published in 2009. They state of ECCH's report "*However, this report was incomplete and included only a third of the CRs /CS located by us for the present review (42).*" Put simply, the reason ECCH's paper included far fewer studies was because it had far clearer, more stringent inclusion criteria such that a large number of the spurious reports included in this paper could not be included. In fact, had the authors of this review read the ECCH review properly they would easily have picked up on a number of cases of mistaken identity or even one case they included where homeopathy is not used at all (Ibsen). The fact that they still chose to include the Ibsen article shows that they didn't read or understand the original full text article, as it doesn't mention homeopathic treatment in any way. The brief English abstract mistakenly refers to the treatments as homeopathic, but is not an accurate translation of the Danish abstract.

The most worrying aspect of this paper is that fact that it was published at all. A journal such as the **International Journal for Clinical Practice** should normally have in place a robust peer-review system to evaluate the papers it eventually publishes. On the basis of this paper, it seems either the journal does not have a peer-review process, or if it does, it does not include anyone with expertise in homeopathy research capable of identifying the poor inclusion criteria and the resulting poor quality data on which the article bases its conclusions. Yes, any therapy is capable of adverse events but this deeply faulted piece of work fails to prove the case for homeopathy.

A full copy of the original paper can be accessed here: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijcp.12026/abstract>

CAM in primary care – patients want GPs who are open to CAM

A recent study published in **Patient Education and Counselling** concluded that "*Most patients in primary care want a GP who listens, inquires about CAM and if necessary refers to or collaborates with CAM practitioners*"

The study set out to explore Dutch patients' perspectives towards the integration of CAM into primary care. It used a mixed-methods approach applied to 416 patients suffering from osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and fibromyalgia. 86% reported they used CAM of which 71% visited a practitioner. The therapies most used were manual therapies, acupuncture and homeopathy. A minority (30%) actively communicated CAM use with their General Practitioner (GP). The majority (92%) preferred a GP who informed them about CAM, 70% a GP who referred to CAM practitioners, and 42% wanted GPs to collaborate with CAM practitioners.

For more information go to : <http://www.pec-journal.com/article/S0738-3991%2812%2900341-2/abstract>

Emerging evidence for cost-effectiveness of CIM therapies

In a comprehensive systematic review of economic evaluations of Complementary and Integrated Medicine aimed at evaluating them for future health reform, 338 economic evaluations were identified of which 204, covering a wide range of CIM for different populations, were published between 2001-2010. The review identified many evaluations missed by previous reviews and is without doubt the most comprehensive review of its kind ever undertaken. It identified emerging evidence of cost-effectiveness and possible cost savings in at least a few clinical populations. The authors conclude that more, better quality studies are needed in this important area.

Ref: Are complementary therapies and integrative medicine cost-effective? a systematic review of economic evaluations
Patricia M Herman, Beth L Poindexter, Claudia M Witt, David M Eisenberg
BMJ Open 2012;2:e001046 doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2012-001046 : <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1472-6882/12/S1/O1>

ECCH attracts growing support on Facebook



ECCH has its own Facebook site and uses it to spread news about homeopathy worldwide while also drawing traffic to its main web-site. Regular news postings means it has now attracted more than 540 followers and 47 friends. **Please add to the list!**

Visit ECCH on Facebook at:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/European-Central-Council-of-Hom`m nb %e0paths-ECCH/153916344644449>

National News - Are we seeing a pandemic of CAM regulation?



'Obamacare' to include CAM and Integrated Medicine Access?

The controversial new healthcare act introduced by President Barack Obama in 2010 called the **Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA)**, otherwise known as 'Obamacare', may eventually make complementary and alternative medicine and integrated medicine as widely accepted and accessible as conventional medicine. The aim of the new law is that all Americans will have access to safe high-quality integrated healthcare. The law is currently being implemented.

The wording of the act specifically mentions CAM and integrative medicine in seven different sections of the law. Two of these sections are deemed essential. The first, a "non-discrimination in healthcare" section, prohibits insurance companies from discriminating against healthcare providers in regard to their participation and coverage in health plans. It was created to encourage full utilization of healthcare providers and reduce the cost of patient care. The second most notable section focuses on establishing community health teams to support patient-centred medical homes. Included within those teams are licensed complementary and alternative medicine practitioners such as chiropractors and naturopaths. At this moment in time homeopaths are not recognised as licensed practitioners.

A 2011 consumer survey found that over 38 million Americans made an excess of 300 million visits annually to CAM therapists, including providers of acupuncture, massage, chiropractic and homeopathy. With President Barack Obama's re-election and the assurance of the ACA, its implementation will now begin in 2014. It is the first time in U.S. history that CAM and integrative medicine practitioners have been included in a national healthcare law and marks a significant step forward for CAM and healthcare generally.



Australia discusses national registration of CAM practitioners

Recently in Melbourne, Victoria the newly formed **Natural Medicine Registration Board (NMRB)** met with the Victorian Health Services Minister to discuss plans for national registration of natural medicine practitioners. The current group has been meeting for three years and is proposing a national board that will list all natural medicine practitioners, regardless of modality. This will significantly improve the mechanisms for public protection as the public will have one place to go to determine if a practitioner is registered and one place to go if there is a complaint. The NMRB will also improve recognition of CAM practitioners as to be registered requires that the practitioner is appropriately trained and meets ongoing requirements in terms of CPD, insurance and first aid.

The NMRB was formed by representatives from 14 associations that cover approximately 85% of all CAM practitioners in Australia. ICH member the Australian Homeopathic Association has been involved from the NMRB's commencement as it has been critical that the largest association representing homeopaths in Australia was represented in this process. The AHA is also one of the few associations to have experience with a registration board and has been able to provide significant value in the formation of the NMRB. The AHA representative, Christine Pope, is on the Steering Committee for the NMRB and has been appointed as one of the initial directors.



New Zealand to move on regulating CAM therapies at last?

In New Zealand there is once more increased discussion of the question of regulation of CAM therapies. This arises from the **Natural Health Council (NZ) Inc.** which is an organisation covering several different therapies. The NHC evolved from the NZ Natural Health Practitioners Accreditation Board (NZNHPAB) which was established in 1987 to set and monitor education standards for naturopathy, homeopathy, herbal medicine, remedial body therapies and osteopathy. The new Council is a national professional council that aims to include members from all natural health modalities with well-documented scopes of practice and high standards of education and monitoring of practitioners.

ICH member, the New Zealand Council of Homeopaths, is a member of the NHC and is currently re-examining the pros and cons of regulation with no decision made yet as to whether to pursue the regulation route for homeopaths. This issue was discussed in some depth several years ago but changes at governmental level at that time caused NZCH to put the whole issue aside.

Given the widespread use of homeopathy and other CAM therapies by members of the New Zealand public it is hoped that the New Zealand Government will finally move to introduce an appropriate system of regulation that assures the quality and safety of the delivery of CAM therapies by qualified CAM practitioners to members of the New Zealand public.



UK moves on regulating CAM therapies too

12 years ago in December 2000 the House of Lords report on CAM in the UK recommended that herbal medicine practitioners and acupuncturists should be statutorily regulated in the public interest and that regulation of homeopaths should be considered at a later date. As 2012 draws to a close neither of the first two are statutorily regulated yet, even though implementation of the EU Herbal Medicines Directive in the UK requires that herbalists should in theory now be statutorily registered in order to be able to continue to legally prescribe herbal medicines for their clients. Thankfully for the herbalists a solution appears to be in sight with moves to statutorily register them under the **Health and Care Professions Council**, a council that already registers many health professions such as chiropodists, physiotherapists, art therapists etc. <http://www.hpc-uk.org/>

Meanwhile, a separate solution for acupuncturists, homeopaths and other CAM therapies is being proposed that will not amount to statutory regulation with its attendant protection of title, but instead will involve a government body that, like the Scandinavian model, publicly accredits, 'kite-marks' and recommends existing voluntary regulatory professional associations that meet established criteria for robust regulation of practitioners. Information on the **Professional Standards Authority** can be accessed here: <http://www.professionalstandards.org.uk>

Contacting ECCH and ICH

For information on ECCH and its member associations consult: Web-site: <http://www.homeopathy-ecch.eu>

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