

EAN News

Newsletter of the EPIET Alumni Network



www.epietalum.net

December 2009

Editorial

Dear EAN Friends,

I bet everyone's busy with making their own Christmas plans already. After all, it almost *is* Christmas. Yeah, that time of the year where you tend to get busy with catching up with everything and - oh yeah, I almost forgot - everyone!

Whether you're staying at home or going on a long holiday, the winter 2009/10 newsletter is here to keep you company and lighten up the long dark winter nights. If you're in the southern hemisphere, we do hope you'll still find this issue interesting for a number of reasons.

The new EAN board elections were held in Stockholm last October. Some people stayed, some changed positions, some stepped down, while new faces have now come onto the board. The new board composition is determined for work. Remember the ones you already know, meet the newbies!

In the EPIET News Flash section, we will read about what is happening in the EPIET programme and what the plans are for 2010. Also, we will receive an update from Nigeria where two current fellows (Marc Rondy and Katie Greenland) went on a mission with the Global Polio Eradication Initiative.

Marc and Katie are not the only two fellows who recently went on a mission, in the Stories from the Field, Janusz Janiec and Delphine Sauvageot are sharing their impressions of an EPIET Balkan mission as mumps attacked the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Esther Kissling and Florian Burckhardt are continuing their contribution of funny EPI cartoons, so don't miss this issue's sequel!

Do enjoy your read!

From the EAN Board

So... who's in the new board?

The EAN elections took place in Stockholm on 27th October 2009, at the EAN Annual General Assembly, during the 3rd ESCAIDE. The positions that were open for candidates were the ones of the president, the vice president, the deputy secretary and the two treasurers.

The new EAN board composition follows:

President: Lorenzo Pezzoli

Vice president: Ioannis Karagiannis

Treasurer (2 positions): Christopher Williams, Helen Bernard

Secretary: Gerd Falkenhorst

Deputy Secretary: Ariane Halm

Lorenzo, Christopher and Gerd were already in the board, so there's an interesting balance between new and old "boardies", as well as between the Mediterranean and the North of Europe.

So, who is actually on the board? What do they look like? What's their relationship to EPIET?

Lorenzo - I am a vet by training. During my EPIET fellowship (Cohort 12) I was based in London at the Centre for Infections. In my free time, when I am not chairing the EAN board, I like photography and sometimes I am also a consultant for WHO mainly working on the evaluation of immunisation campaigns.



Ioannis - I was based at the RIVM in the Netherlands for my EPIET fellowship (Cohort 12). Since then, I have been working at the Hellenic Centre for Diseases Control and Prevention in Athens.



Chris - After studying physics and microbiology as an undergraduate, I trained as a doctor in south-east London and then worked in general internal medicine and infectious diseases in hospitals in London and southern England. I then undertook public health training in the East of England (2001-2006),



specialising in health protection, before entering the EPIET programme in 2006. Areas of publication and research include meningitis epidemiology, mass event surveillance, influenza, rotavirus epidemiology, and psittacosis. I am currently a consultant in communicable disease control in the East of England (mainly Norfolk, for those that know). I am married with two children and like walking in the country, bird-watching and looking at the sea. I also play the guitar badly and have been known to sing on occasion.

Helen - Before I became a PAE fellow in Bavaria from 2006-2008 I worked as a physician in Internal Medicine/Infectious Diseases in Berlin. During the past year I have been dealing with Noro, Salmonella, Q fever, and the inevitable influenza at RKI's Gastrointestinal Infections, Zoonoses and Tropical Infections Unit.



Gerd - A medical doctor by training, I joined EPIET in 2004 (cohort 10) after many years of working in different areas of clinical medicine and tropical public health. My EPIET training at Statens Serum Institut in Copenhagen was a great experience, and I got stuck there to do a PhD in epidemiology. In my spare time I am either a king or a robber (as instructed by my girlfriend's lovely daughter), running through the park or sprawling on the couch reading.



Ariane - My background is in pharmacy and before diving into epidemiology I had some very interesting years working on the humanitarian side of this field. Last October I finished EPIET (cohort 13) at the Centre for Infections in London, and have now started working for EpiConcept.



And the EAN Webmaster

Florian - Before I accidentally fell into a time vortex that catapulted me into the 20th century, I was member of the local nobility in a small hamlet in Germany. Arriving here, I complemented my MSc Biology (Munich)



with an MSc Epidemiology (Edinburgh) and embraced cohort 12 as German FETP at RKI (Berlin) in 2006. My journey took me to the State Health Department of Rhineland Palatinate (a German State) where I head the Infectious Diseases Unit. My beloved comrade Lorenzo asked me to "do the website", so I became the new webmaster, though I prefer web-janitor. Accessible under <http://www.epietalum.net> it is waiting for your contributions!

EAN Membership

EAN is currently comprised of 243 members. All graduates and current fellows of European Field Epidemiology Training Programmes can join the EAN. External applications from colleagues working in public health epidemiology are also very welcome; they need to be endorsed by 2 EAN members. If you want to join, please send an email to eanboard@gmail.com to request the application form. Our statutes specify that external members may not exceed 10% of the regular members, therefore there is a waiting list for external members.

EAN membership fees

The annual membership fee is €20. New fellows are exempt from this for the first year of their fellowship. Starting from the second year of fellowship every member should pay the fee. We kindly ask you to contact the EAN Treasurers at eanboard@gmail.com, in case you want to get information on your membership payment. You should all have received a reminder about this: so please, make arrangements for overdue payments if you have not already done so. We also encourage you to pay for more than one year so to secure your membership for a longer period of time and avoid duplicating bank charges.

We are currently in a transition period from the old board to the new board. For the time being we are using our bank account in Malta which was managed by Gianfranco Spiteri, the former EAN Treasurer

Name of Bank: HSBC Malta

Account Holder: Epiet Alumni Network

Account number: 85110443451

Sort code: 44853

IBAN: MT41MMEB44853000000085110443451

BIC/Swift: MMEBMTMT

Please indicate your name and membership year as reference in the bank transfer and also send an email to eanboard@gmail.com to inform us about your payment (sometimes names are not correctly transmitted with the transfer).



EAN was involved in the organization of the 3rd European Scientific Conference on Applied Infectious Disease Epidemiology (ESCAIDE), which took place in Stockholm, Sweden, on 26-28 October 2009.

Five people received the EAN travel grants in order to be able to participate in ESCAIDE. Following the conference, EAN asked people who received them to kindly provide with a short text describing their experience.

Mina Sadeq, Morocco:

Attending the ESCAIDE 2009 was an interesting instructive fruitful experience.

An agreement about a twinning project is supported by the European Union and was signed between the Institut de Veille Sanitaire- France and the National Institute of Hygiene (NIH) where I work: the NIH is anticipated to become a National Public Health Institute (NPHI). Attending the ESCAIDE was a wonderful opportunity to have an idea about the different topics the European NPHIs (RIVM, KTL, RKI, etc) work on in order to consider collaborations.

On the other hand, the Moroccan Ministry of Health is developing a FE(L)TP with the coordination of the American CDC-Atlanta and TEPHINET. Pr Rajae ElAouad, Director of the NIH, is in charge. Meeting Dr Dionisio Herrera (TEPHINET), Paul Kelly (TEPHINET), Dr Viviane Bremer (EPIET Chief coordinator-ECDC), Dr Katharina Alpers (German FETP coordinator), and other EPIET fellows enabled me to know more about the EPIET experience, which would help for our FE(L)TP experience.

Before 2005, my field was water chemical pollution. I benefited from trainings related to applied epidemiology and to environmental epidemiology at Rollins School of Public Health-Emory University-Atlanta-USA in 2005 and 2006. I have never imagined that a part of my first epidemiologic study will be presented (poster) at such an important conference which is ESCAIDE.

Maria São José Nascimento & João Mesquita, Portugal:

I can truly say that the EAN travel grant was decisive for us to attend the Stockholm ESCAIDE 2009 meeting because it reduced the expenses of our travel and accommodation (for me and my PhD student). It was a great opportunity for us to be able to present in this important European meeting on Epidemiology what to our knowledge constitute the first study of an outbreak of norovirus gastroenteritis in Portugal. The attendance to ESCAIDE 2009 provided us, researchers and academics of the Faculty of Pharmacy of University of Porto, Portugal, not only valuable and up-to-date knowledge of infectious diseases epidemiology in Europe, but also boosted the scarce participation of Portugal in this kind of meetings.

EPI Photo



The EPIET crowd at RKI (Stine Nielsen, Michaela Spacková, and Sandra Dudareva) wishes happy holidays to EAN!

EPIET News

European Field Epidemiology Training Programmes in Eurosurveillance

A special issue of Eurosurveillance devoted to training of field epidemiologists within diverse public health systems was published on the 29th October 2009. The issue highlighted the contributions that these programmes are making in Europe. It is available online at:

<http://www.eurosurveillance.org/Public/Articles/Archives.aspx?PublicationId=11496>

The EPIET Training Site Forum

Representatives from ECDC, EPIET, EAN and the training sites in Europe have met at EPIET Training Site Forum in Stockholm on the 29th October 2009 to assess and discuss the needs of this growing training programme. Items under discussion were: the evaluation of EPIET, the need for formal training in microbiological methods for all fellows, planning an optional EPIET module on statistical sampling methods, the advantages and challenges of the growth of the programme, and establishing other EPIET-affiliated training programmes in Europe.

The Evaluation of EPIET

A call for tender for the evaluation of EPIET was launched in spring 2009. The offers were reviewed by a steering committee of 11 members and The Royal Tropical Institute from the Netherlands was selected for this task. The evaluation process started with an inception meeting during late summer and is now fully in process. Some of you may have met the evaluators during ESCAIDE. The evaluators are also planning a survey of all EAN members. Although EAN will not take part in the design of this survey to avoid bias, the EAN Board has offered to support this initiative by responding to the pilot questionnaire before it will be sent out to members. We expect the final report of this evaluation in spring 2010, meaning that the practical recommendation will probably take effect for Cohort 17.

Call for Grants EPIET Cohort 16

The Call for Grants for EPIET fellowship cohort 16 has been published on the ECDC website: <http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/aboutus/jobs/Pages/Fellowships.aspx> Deadline for applications is February 7, 2010 at 24:00 CET. More information on the EPIET fellowship can be found at EPIET's website www.epiet.org

NB: The EPIET website is going to be transferred to the ECDC web portal within the coming days and the above mentioned EPIET website redirected automatically.

Mission Flash News

The use of LQAS to assess polio immunization coverage in Nigeria

By Katie Greenland and Marc Rondy (EPIET Cohort 14 - RIVM)



WHO has been developing and testing the Lot Quality Assurance Sampling (LQAS) method, which classifies areas of interest (lots) as with acceptable or unacceptable levels of vaccine coverage, to evaluate vaccination programs in developing countries.

Conducting LQAS surveys in the field is very straightforward: if the number of unvaccinated individuals in a sample exceeds a pre-set decision value, the area (lot) is classified with an unsatisfactory level of vaccine coverage, and mop up or other activities are recommended. The easy application of this method makes LQAS a very operational tool to detect pockets of low vaccine coverage and can therefore direct where further vaccination efforts should be focused.

Nigeria is one of four polio endemic countries in the world. In order to eradicate polio from Nigeria, the Nigerian Government regularly coordinates intensive immunization campaigns with support from partners such as the World Health Organization, UNICEF and Rotary International. Evaluating the quality of OPV coverage is critical to target areas of low coverage. Therefore, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative is piloting a study to assess OPV coverage in 20 LGAs (districts) in 5 high-risk states after the November vaccination round in order to determine the feasibility of LQAS in the Nigerian setting. The results of this study, which was conducted in November-December 2009, will be important to provide recommendations to efficiently monitor and guide future OPV campaigns in Nigeria and other polio-infected countries.

This article will also appear in the next edition of the Polio Pipeline Newsletter available at <http://www.polioeradication.org/>

Interview

EAN interviews Marion Muehlen (German FETP cohort 9, ECDC) on life, family and work.

Marion was interviewed in Athens during the module of Computer Tools in Outbreak Investigation for cohort 15. A new job, a new life and a new city are lying ahead of her.



EAN: Marion, you have the reputation of a person who doesn't have a very clear answer when you're asked where you come from.

Marion: Well, there are many answers depending on the question (where I was born, where I live, where I come from, where I work). But the latter one will change very soon!

EAN: Perhaps you can answer some of these questions for us.

Marion: I was born in São Paulo, Brazil. Now I come from Portugal, but next month I'll be coming from Stockholm, Sweden.

EAN: Not everyone may be aware of your role in EPIET. So, what's the link between you and EPIET?

Marion: I first applied for EPIET in 2002. One year later, I became a FETP fellow at the Robert Koch Institute in Germany with cohort 9. I didn't have to move outside Germany, so it turned out to be good and suitable for me as I already had family.

EAN: What's your story after EPIET and what's your current link with the programme?

Marion: I have worked on modelling of transmission of infectious diseases in Portugal. The EPIET coordination team itself changed a lot. When Viviane moved to Stockholm as chief coordinator, I decided to apply at RKI to cover Viviane's absence. I was allowed to work from Portugal, even though it was hard with all the flights. Then, Richard stepped out of EPIET and the position in London was opened, which, as a work place, is easier to commute to. This was then a part time job which allowed me to continue my work in Portugal.

EAN: What is changing for you now?

Marion: An EPIET coordinator position was opened in Stockholm, so I applied as this would mean much less travel for me. I am really happy I got the position, but because it is a full-time position, I am giving up all other jobs.

EAN: Tell us something more about your new position.

Marion: It's the same EPIET coordination position, but based directly at ECDC. I am now sharing an office with Viviane Bremer, and it's also much more interactive with the EPIET Programme Office and ECDC's Training Section. I'm now closer to everything related to EPIET.

EAN: How does it feel to be leaving Portugal?

Marion: There are still family links with Portugal. Two of my kids are moving with me to Stockholm, where a house is ready and waiting, but my oldest daughter is staying in Portugal. Moving to Stockholm was not a problem; but leaving Portugal was.

EAN: Tell us about your EAN board experience.

Marion: I was the vice-president of EAN for two years (2007-2009). It's been a great experience, though I left with a feeling that some things were left unfinished. It's also been a lot of work and, slowly, it was becoming too much.

EAN: Unfinished?

Marion: We were preparing a survey among EAN members but EPIET was being evaluated at the same time, so the survey was postponed. Also, we wanted to start chasing down the members who were not paying. Some people, especially in the older cohorts, have been lost track of; there were ideas of getting them back to EAN if they were still interested.

EAN: Do you have any suggestions for the new EAN board?

Marion: We are *the* field epidemiologists' network in the world, a great network. You should continue to engage the other programs more actively (PEAC, PROPHET) and expand to other European FETP programmes in the future (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey). Perhaps a mentoring scheme could be a good idea, too; one where current fellows are appointed alumni to help them with their everyday life, mostly, if that is needed. I hope EAN continues to promote the representation of this unique network of field epidemiologists.

Stories from the Field

A Balkan adventure from a Polish and French point of view

By *Janusz Janiec* (EPIET Cohort 14, National Public Health Service, Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre, Wales) and *Delphine Sauvageot* (EPIET Cohort 14, Direcção-Geral de Saude, Lisboa, Portugal)

March 2009 - 10,588 mumps cases reported in a 15 months' time leading to a real political concern... a non negligible proportion of vaccinated cases leading to a risk of confidence loss in vaccination programmes... A Balkan country from former Yugoslavia, cradle of a millenarian civilisation... All the ingredients to make this international mission very fascinating for two naïve EPIET fellows! So many things could be told about the work done, the results obtained, the people met, the professional achievements, but we decided to talk about our own feelings and to share with you what we saw and what surprised us...

The first steps on the Balkan soil...

Janusz: First night in a local hotel: small family business where all the family members took turns at the reception for the check in and out of clients. In front of the general hospital, the place was located on one of the busiest roads of the town. The hotel had 6 rooms on the same floor with no night reception, no dining room or lounge. Breakfasts were included in the room price but had to be taken in the neighbourhood shop: a sandwich eaten standing up on the street!

The second night was in another local "hotel", one kilometre away, located in a very quiet residential area: two-floor individual house with garden and owners living in a private apartment in the house basement. The garden was surrounded by a high metal fence, some people were entering and going out of the house during the night, only cash payment was accepted: strange feeling but at least breakfasts were taken on a table. We decided to make this place our base!

A special diet for one month...

Janusz: Well, breakfasts were there, nice but identical every day: one egg, two toasts, marmalade and honey. As far as lunches are concerned, well, there was no lunch! It was a coffee; local people were more used to bringing some small things to eat from home and to eat them rapidly in their own office. Sometimes, we decided to have a lunch in a nice restaurant, close to the office.

Our dinner (at 17h30!!!) usually was a very famous, very traditional, very popular, and most of the time very tasty ...pizza. In the middle of this gastronomic routine, one exception occurred! A morning of cold weather, we had our best coffee ever. We settled in a fast-food restaurant for an expected warm and rapid coffee. However, taking a coffee was not possible without taking a full meal. Fortunately, the owner of the neighbourhood tire shop was the uncle of our driver. After a very rapid negotiation with the waiter, we were able to stay in the terrace of the fast-food restaurant to drink coffee prepared by our driver's uncle!



As 007 taught us, style is very important during missions: Janusz considering a Strarsky&Hutch-esque vehicle to speed up the control of mumps...

The first contact with mumps...

Delphine: Two-week discussion with local health professionals and ECDC-WHO team members... an ultimate meeting presenting two possible study designs to national authorities... and finally, the decision to conduct a retrospective cohort study in two high schools located in areas with high attack rates. Such an awaited decision was strongly celebrated in a nice restaurant downtown... Good wine, nice meal and nice friendly company. 22h, it was time to go back home to have a rest in order to start this new work period with enough energy! Once outside, a group of 5-6 children aged 5 to 12 years old surrounded us and requested money then suddenly disappeared... Disappeared yes, but with my wallet! The programme of the night turned into something different than expected. A visit to the police station was therefore required. With the support of our local colleagues, we testified the events of the night to a young and solicitous policeman aged about 25-35 years who had had mumps during the last month! The field work was starting :-)

A departure like a Macedonian princess...

Delphine: Last day, the study was done, the debriefing to the national authorities was done, our farewells to all the wonderful people we met were done and promises to come back made! Our one month mission, so long and so short at the same time, had finished. An ultimate drink at 3:00 am to share our memories, feelings and regrets to look at the end of this warm time together. The taxi for the airport was scheduled for 5:00 am for a flight at 6:30 am: no time for a nap! But, sometimes, the will is not powerful enough and I woke up suddenly at 5:40. The taxi was still waiting outside! In a rush, I took my suitcase and ran out. The young taxi man was sceptical on chances to arrive on time but decided to call a friend of his who worked at the airport to inform him about our imminent arrival. It was without counting with the old age of the car which stopped after the first toll on the motorway. He pushed the car on the right side and after 6-7 jolts, the car was on the road again: at 6:25, we reached the airport! No one was in the air terminal, all the passengers had already boarded, and check-in points were closed! One guy appeared from nowhere and walked to me with my boarding pass. I followed him with my suitcase to the customs office. A rapid security check, I was on the tarmac. A car was waiting for me: "A special taxi for you, Miss, it is your day of luck!". The door of the plane had stayed opened, the hostesses waiting for my arrival.



...and Delphine shopping for the latest high technology gadgets

EPI Tools



After having written a great study report, are you wondering where should you publish your findings?

Jane (Journal/Author Name Estimator) is a freely available web-based application that can suggest journals and experts who have published similar articles.

Jane is very easy to use: once you have copy-pasted your abstract in the online form you have three options:

- 1) Find Journals: to find a list of the most appropriate journals for your findings
- 2) Find Articles: to find articles similar to your study
- 3) Find Authors: to find experts that have published work similar to yours

Jane will then compare your document to millions of documents in Medline to find the best matching journals, authors or articles.

Try Jane at: <http://biosemantics.org/jane/index.php>

This EPI Tool was recommended by Christian Winter.

Upcoming Conferences and Courses

- [May 26-29, 2010 3rd Northern European Conference on Travel Medicine \(NECTM\), Hamburg](#)
- [May 5-8, 2010 28th Annual Meeting of the European Society for Paediatric Infectious Diseases \(ESPID\), Nice, France](#)
- [April 10-13, 2010 European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases Vienna, Austria](#)
- [March 18-22, 2010 Fifth Decennial International Conference on Healthcare-Associated Infections](#)
- [March 9-12, 2010 14th International Congress on Infectious Diseases \(ICID\)](#)
- [5-8 May 2010, 28th Annual Meeting of the European Society for Paediatric Infectious Diseases \(ESPID\), Nice, France,](#)
- [1-4 February 2010, 2nd International Conference on Drug Discovery and Therapy \(2nd ICDDT 2010\), Dubai, UAE.](#)

Check the **EAN Website** for additional upcoming conferences
(<http://epietalum.net/content/conferences>) and regularly updated job offers (<http://epietalum.net/content/jobs-0>).

Contribute to the next EAN Newsletter!

We are currently looking for contributions for the next newsletter. Would you like to share an interesting experience? Are you doing an exciting job somewhere in the world and beyond? Please e-mail your story to EANboard@gmail.com.

EPI Cartoon



The Epi Cartoon is kindly provided by Esther Kissling and Florian Burckhardt from their www.disease-detectives.org initiative.