

# EAN News

Newsletter of the EPIET Alumni Network



June 2010

## Editorial

Dear EAN friends,

Welcome to the -belated- June 2010 issue of the EAN Newsletter. Some recent news (most of them very good news!) and consequent developments in the composition of the EAN Board have prevented us to dedicate the usual amount of time and manpower to editorial activities. We apologize if this edition is slightly shorter than normal. No discounts have been made on the interest of the articles, though.

In this issue, read more information on the upcoming 4<sup>th</sup> ESCAIDE and how EAN is involved in it. Also, read about the changing EPIET Coordination Team and the selection of Cohort 16!

Last but not least, in “Stories from the Field”, read an article by **David Mukanga** and **Rebecca Babirye**, provided to EAN by **Norbert Schwarz** (Cohort 12), about the African Field Epidemiology Training Programmes and how they contribute to a better health in the continent.

Enjoy your read and especially enjoy the summer! See you around in autumn, in time before ESCAIDE!

## From the EAN Board

### Changes to the EAN Board

The main news is that one of the two EAN Secretaries is pregnant and about to leave the EAN duties for something way more important. As you may have guessed we are talking about Ariane Halm who will soon (VERY soon, actually) leave the board on maternity leave. Congratulations to Ariane for this new adventure!

As a matter of fact, also our other secretary, Gerhard Falkenhorst, has decided to *jump over board* before the end of his term. No, Gerd is not pregnant, but a mixture of personal and professional reasons prevents him regretfully to dedicate further energies to the EAN Board. So, good luck to Gerd too!

Finally, Ioannis Karagiannis, our vice-president, has recently been integrated in the EPIET Coordination Team (read below in “EPIET Flash News”). The two

positions have many duties in common and Yannis has decided that it is better if he leaves the EAN Board to concentrate only on the EPIET Coordination (he’s still in the family business, no worries). So, last but not least, good luck to Yannis!

We take this opportunity also to thank the three of you for the time, effort, and dedication that you all have put in the EAN. It’s been great working with you!

The remaining three of us, Lorenzo Pezzoli (the President), and Helen Bernard and Chris Williams (the Treasurers), remain *on board*. We are sure that most of you know the statutes by heart, but, as a reminder, **Article 8** says that “if a post is vacant, the remaining Advisory officers can appoint a provisional replacement from the members pending the next elections”.

Therefore, we have appointed Florian Burckhardt (Cohort 12), the Head of IT for EAN, as Interim Secretary and Andreas Gilsdorf (Cohort 11) as Interim Vice-President. *Willkommen!*

We are still looking for a third volunteer to act as the second Interim Secretary. Can any interested and enthusiastic EAN member please get in touch with us ASAP? Please express your interest by writing to [eanboard@gmail.com](mailto:eanboard@gmail.com). If no-one will volunteer, we will just select someone randomly among the members who are late paying their membership fee, we know who you are...

These three interim EAN Board positions will be in office until November 2010, when they will be open for regular election during the EAN General Assembly (GA), which will be held in Lisbon during the ESCAIDE conference.

### EAN Module on Time Series Analysis

The EAN module on Time Series Analysis (TSA), which was going to be held in Berlin in May 2010, was cancelled because only few members were interested/available at the suggested date. The board invites members to volunteer for the organization of a TSA module in Lisbon around ESCAIDE. Please email us if you are interested in organizing this module ([eanbord@gmail.com](mailto:eanbord@gmail.com)).

## 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](mailto: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 in order 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**



EAN is involved in the organization of the 4<sup>th</sup> European Scientific Conference on Applied Infectious Disease Epidemiology (ESCAIDE), which will take place in Lisbon, Portugal, on 11-13 November 2010. The conference will be held at the Lisboa Congress Centre (LCC), located in the centre of Lisbon: <http://www.lisboacc.pt/portal>.

The program will cover a wide range of topics related to applied infectious disease epidemiology including: disease outbreaks, surveillance, antimicrobial resistance, healthcare associated- infections, food- and waterborne diseases, zoonoses, vector borne diseases vaccine preventable diseases, HIV and other STIs, tuberculosis, respiratory diseases, influenza, modeling and statistics for applied infectious disease epidemiology and methods for microbial identification.

In addition 4 plenary sessions will be organized covering the following themes:

1. Is infectious disease eradication feasible in the 21st Century?
2. Assessing the evidence base for public health action: Judging quality in epidemiological studies and outbreak investigations
3. A(H1N1): lessons learnt from the 2009 pandemic
4. Novel methods to identify and assess infectious disease threats

The call for abstracts closed on Monday 12th July and abstracts revision is now in full swing.

Authors expecting burning findings from their research or outbreak investigation can be reassured that a limited number of abstracts will also be considered for late-breaker submission, which will close on 24 September 2010.

## EPIET Flash News

### EPIET Cohort 16 Selection

The selection of the 16th cohort of EPIET fellows has been completed!

The face-to-face interviews with the EPIET selection committee and the host training sites and the final matching took place in central Stockholm from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 2010. EAN was represented in the selection committee by Lorenzo. Based on all the rankings, such as the ranking of the selection committee, the ranking of the institutes by the candidates and the ranking of candidates by the institutes, the matching meeting took place on Friday 21 morning to match the candidates with a host institute. Also a waiting list of candidates that could not be placed was made. The final list of selected fellows will be published in the next EAN newsletter. We look forward to welcoming the new cohort!

### New faces in the EPIET Coordination Team

Since a few days, Ioannis Karagiannis (Cohort 12) has started working at the Robert Koch Institut (RKI) in Berlin as an EPIET coordinator, taking up the position that Doris Radun held until May 2010.

## Stories from the Field

By David Mukanga and Rebecca Babirye (*African Field Epidemiology Network - AFENET, Plot 23, Mackenzie Vale, Kololo P.O. Box 12874 Kampala, Uganda*)

Sixty-four out of 100 deaths in Africa result from preventable communicable diseases like measles, cholera and typhoid. Of these deaths, four in ten are children- Africa's future. Often, these deaths occur due to poor access to health facilities, inadequate resources in health facilities and, most critical to note, a shortage of skilled public health workers - among others. The African continent is in an even more precarious position as it bears 24% of the global burden of disease and yet has a meager 3% of the world's health workers. However, this grim image is slowly starting to fade as Africa continues to make progress in developing the capacity of its health manpower to manage this plethora of communicable diseases. One of the leaps the continent has made is the establishment of Field Epidemiology and (Laboratory) Training Programs (FE(L)TPs) in various countries.

FE(L)TPs are modeled along the United States Centers for Disease Control's Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) that has been in existence since 1951. The first Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) in sub-Saharan Africa was established in Zimbabwe with support from the Rockefeller Foundation. Then called Public Health Schools Without Walls (PHSWOWs), similar programs were set up in Uganda (1994) and Ghana (1995). These and newly created programs then formed a networking organization called the African Field Epidemiology Network (AFENET) in 2005. Today, AFENET comprises nine member programs, in East, West and Southern Africa.

The nature of the programs has evolved over time, with a change in focus from being purely applied epidemiology to include public health laboratory practice and veterinary public health in newer programs. This evolution has been fuelled by deficiencies in public health systems, such as inadequate laboratory leadership and capacity, coupled with the increasing importance of zoonoses in the public health arena. The addition of the veterinary public health component to the FE(L)TP curriculum is a move towards encouraging African countries to encompass the "One World, One Health" concept.

FE(L)TPs are fertile ground for public health professionals to enhance their field epidemiology knowledge and skills while taking part in disease surveillance and outbreak response activities in their countries. The programs are hinged on partnerships between Ministries of Health and academic institutions which accredit trainees' qualifications at the end of the training period. Approximately 75% of trainees' time is spent on field work activities, where they directly build and strengthen public health systems that serve communities. Such partnerships between government, academic and international institutions create a powerful mechanism for addressing difficult problems by leveraging on the strengths of different partners.

With the growing threat of cross-border diseases, AFENET has boosted inter-country collaboration among African nations. FE(L)TPs have helped to strengthen cross-border surveillance systems which have helped to check the transmission of diseases and promoted the enforcement of the International Health Regulations (IHR). Trainees of the programs continue to be a major resource in outbreak response activities for example during outbreaks of Rift Valley Fever (South Africa-2010 and Kenya-2005), cholera (Zimbabwe- 2009), and Ebola (Uganda-2007). The prevailing cross-border relationships have also enabled trainees from different regions in Africa to study in different programs in the Network to get an appreciation of public health problems there and pick lessons from particular countries' surveillance and response mechanisms.

To date, more than 500 persons have graduated from FE(L)TPs within the region. These have gone on to serve in various positions in ministries of health, local

and international non-governmental organizations and academic institutions, where they influence policy. The success of FE(L)TPs has resulted in a resounding desire by ministries of health in Africa to start their own program. This year alone, three programs will commence in Angola, Mozambique and Rwanda.

Authors, Tulchinsky and Varavikova, in their book "The New Public Health", state that failure to prepare public health professionals and support systems is an invitation to disaster, both epidemiologically and economically; Africa cannot afford such laxity. Though FE(L)TPs have since their inception been a success story, more needs to be done to elevate Africa's health systems, especially if they are to meet the Millennium Development Goals. More and stronger partnerships need to be created, and governments have to appreciate the role of the training programs so as to build formidable workforces.

<http://www.afenet.net>



**Trainees of the Nigeria Field Epidemiology & Laboratory Training Program carry out investigations during a disease outbreak in Nigeria**

## Upcoming Conferences and Courses

▫ [Dec 5-10, 2010: 15th International Biometric Conference, Florianopolis \(Brazil\)](#)

▫ [Nov 11-13, 2010: European Scientific Conference on Applied Infectious Diseases Epidemiology \(ESCAIDE\), Lisbon, Portugal](#)

[October 3-5, 2010: 4th Vaccine and ISV Annual Global Congress, Vienna, Austria](#)

▫ [August 23-26, 2010: 2nd Symposium on Food Associated Pathogens, Grythyttan, Sweden](#)

## Contribute to the next EAN Newsletter!

We are currently looking for contributions for the Autumn 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](mailto:EANboard@gmail.com).

## EPI Cartoon



by Esther Kissling (EPIET Cohort 12).