



Dear member,

We are slowly increasing our understanding of the many risk factors for suicide and we are accumulating experiences in suicide prevention within various settings in society. Suicide is, however, such a complex and multi-faceted problem that we can never expect to find single or simple solutions that can embrace the whole field. We have therefore come to realize that large scale effective suicide prevention requires coordinated action from a range of sectors in the society. This is why an increasing number of countries have initiated national suicide prevention strategies over the last decade. It is very encouraging indeed currently to observe the many creative approaches chosen by different countries, provinces and regions. Certainly, we have a lot to learn from each other. One upcoming occasion to learn will for Europeans be the WHO European Ministerial Conference on Mental Health to be held in January 2005. Suicide prevention will be one of the important issues addressed at this conference which is the first of its kind. IASP will naturally be present at this event and we hope to get back to you with more information later.

In the US, the ambitious National strategy for suicide prevention launched in 2001, has recently taken an important step forward through the 'Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act' signed into law in October this year. This law sanctions an 82 million dollar allocation for expansion and development of suicide prevention and intervention programmes aimed at youth and also provides grants to colleges and universities for student suicide preventive programmes. In Europe, the Commission is just about to announce their third round of grants for public health programmes (including mental health) under the European Public Health Programme (2003-2008). We really hope that many of our US and European members will be willing and able to compete for these funds since funding is really an extremely important aspect of the expansion of the field of suicide prevention.

The second announcement of the XXIII IASP World Conference in Durban Sept 13-16th 2005 is in the mail these days. We really hope you will find the programme we have prepared attractive and innovative. Now is the time to start planning for your own contributions and activities for this event.

In many corners of the world people are now entering a holy season. At this occasion the IASP board would like to extend to all members our very best wishes for a peaceful and relaxing holidays season!

Lars Mehlum
President

Durban 2005

**XXIII IASP World Congress
13 – 16 September 2005:**

**"Scaling the Summit: Preventing
Suicidal Behaviour in Diverse Cultures"**



The organizers of the 23rd IASP Congress which will be held in Durban, South Africa, have put together an exciting programme where academics, researchers, mental health professionals, crisis workers, volunteers and suicide survivors can interact.

For the first time this congress is being held in Africa and we are very excited by this. The overall theme for this congress is 'Scaling the Summit. Preventing Suicidal Behaviour in Diverse Cultures'.

We are pleased to inform you that the second announcement and call of abstracts has now gone out and that several internationally renowned organisations in the field of suicide research and prevention have agreed to support this prestigious congress. The congress' International Scientific and Advisory Committees comprise eminent professionals in their respective areas. An exciting programme is provided which will be of the highest international standards. A wide range of topics and themes are included with particular emphasis on appropriate representation of speakers and inter-disciplinary communication in suicide prevention in diverse cultures with an emphasis on the prevention of suicide in developing societies and Africa.

One glance at the second announcement will show that social arrangements will include wonderful opportunities to experience the beautiful scenery and exciting wildlife of South Africa and KwaZulu-Natal, which is also known as the Kingdom of the Zulu. A comprehensive cultural programme has been arranged for participants and accompanying persons. Durban has an exciting cosmopolitan flavour, being a coastal city on the east coast of South Africa. The province of KwaZulu-Natal is the most diverse of South Africa's nine provinces, both culturally and geographically. It boasts a long, sub-tropical coastline, lakes and rivers, game reserves, rolling African bushveld country and the steep, uncompromising slopes of the mighty Drakensberg Mountains. We hope to see you at this exciting event.



The IASP 2005 Congress,
Durban, South Africa.



Task Force:

Cross-national systems for certifying suicidal deaths

(Chair: Lanny Berman)

Goals:

1. To establish a database for how a suicidal death is certified from a death certificate
2. To establish how we can best explain how suicides are tabulated in national database/vital registry systems
3. To provide the basis for case-control, cross-national studies to identify reasonably equivalent national systems with, for example, high versus low suicide rates or to reasonably conclude that such an exercise is futile

Members: Ella Arensman, Annette Beautrais, Diego De Leo Onja Grad, Lars Mehlum, Merete Nordentoft, Armin Schmidtke Jean Pierre Soubrier, Kees van Heeringen, Lakshmi Vijayakumar

Current state of things:

Requests for information and summaries of death registrations were sent to a number of IASP members. The intent of this initial probe is to build a more standardized interview format, which will then be sent to correspondents in multiple countries which can provide uniform data cross-nationally.

Planned activities:

Follow-up contacts are necessary. The goal is to gather information from 10 disparate countries to format a standardized questionnaire that would then be widely disseminated. It is hoped that this initial part of the project would be completed by the spring such that the questionnaire would be distributed by the time of the Durban Congress.



Dear colleagues,

It is a great pleasure to invite you to the 4th Meeting on "Suicide: the Interplay between Genes and Environment" in Ghent, Belgium, 2 – 4 June 2005.

This meeting is hosted by the Unit for Suicide Research at the University of Ghent and the Institute of Public Health of the Republic of Slovenia.

The three previous meetings have been organised biennially by our friends and colleagues at the Slovenian Institute of Public Health. The growing interest in these meetings, the complexity of the subject and the rapidly increasing insight in the topic have made us decide to make this a yearly meeting. The meeting will be organised alternating in Ghent and Slovenia under the auspices of the International Association for Suicide Prevention.

The theme of the 2005 meeting will be 'Sensitivity, depression and suicide: mechanisms of vulnerability and resilience'. Main topics of the meeting will therefore include a discussion of the social and interpersonal precipitants of suicidal behaviour, the genetic, biological, cognitive psychological and neuropsychological aspects of the reactivity to such stressors and associated emotions, and the understanding of the behavioural response.

We aim at bringing together clinicians and researchers with psychological, biological and social backgrounds in order to develop stimulating discussions. The scientific and organising committees have agreed to keep these meetings relatively small with regard to the number of participants. Therefore, 130 participants will be welcomed on a first come, first serve basis. More detailed information can be found at www.suicide-interplay.be.

We look forward to meeting you in Ghent!

Kees van Heeringen

On behalf of the Organizing Committee



Self-poisoning with pesticides

The International Association for Suicide Prevention is concerned with the problem of suicides with pesticides in the third world. Several reports have drawn our attention to the fact that more than 300 000 lives are lost due to suicide with this



method each year. It is likely that a large proportion of this huge number of deaths could be prevented if dangerous pesticides were not as easily available as is the case in many third world countries. WHO has been involved in discussing this important health problem, and it has been suggested that pesticides should be stored more centralised, and it has been proposed to make a minimum pesticide list, recommending governments to allow only less dangerous compounds to be sold in their country. The board of IASP will be most interested in promoting initiatives that could reduce the number of pesticide deaths, and we consider it very likely

that removal of the most dangerous compounds will have great impact on suicide mortality in the third world. We will therefore like to promote law regulations based on the principles of a minimum pesticide list and we hope to be able to engage WHO in this effort.

In a paper from Michael Eddlestone et al. the problem is clearly described (Eddlestone M, Karalliedde L, Buckley N et al. Pesticide poisoning in the developing world – a minimum pesticides list. *Lancet* 2002;360: 1163–67)

Merete Nordentoft, General Secretary