Dear member,

Sadly, the turn of the year brought pain and sorrow to many nations and families due to the immense tsunami disaster in South Asia. The IASP Executive Committee has been in contact with several of our members and member organizations in the countries of this region and their personal accounts have made a deep impression on us all. In the midst of this situation it is, however, very encouraging to see how people have mobilized in order to respond to the many needs of survivors and bereaved and to national and local challenges in the wake of the disaster. As Executive Committee we wish to express our condolences and concerns towards those of our members and partners who have been affected by the tsunami. We do hope that the IASP network will continue to be used as much as possible for national and international collaboration in the time to come. The membership directory is available online (for members) at www.iasp.info. If you have forgotten your username and password, don't hesitate to contact us.

Our website has recently been expanded with a Spanish edition of many of the pages, thanks to good work from Brian Mishara’s group in Montréal. Adding this to the English, French and Chinese editions means that we are now able to reach out with information in 4 major languages - making IASP a little bit more accessible and visible than before. Let me remind you all that we are very grateful to receive information, papers and relevant material in all these languages to put out on the website to the benefit of the field of suicide prevention.

With the New Year IASP is entering a challenging and exciting period - a year with preparations for the Durban IASP World conference, meetings of our different task forces and other organizational fora. It is a year with elections (start thinking about who to nominate) for IASP officers and with promotion of our third World Suicide Prevention Day, just to mention some of it.

Lars Mehlum
President

What we’ve learnt from the World Suicide Prevention Day 2004

We have recently developed a brief internet review regarding the World Suicide Prevention Day 2004 (WSPD) by searching some websites during the period from 26th October to January 6, 2005. Most of the information was generated from internet, media reports and organisations’ own websites. The Countries/Organizations which have supported the WSPD 2004 were mainly from North America, followed by European countries, Oceania (mainly Australia and New Zealand) and a few countries in Asia. Only a few countries in Eastern Europe, which have the highest suicide rates, reported activities in relation to WSPD. The results show that most of the activities are organized with the purpose of raising awareness of suicide prevention. Besides, there are quite a number of countries and cities who have organized programmes with a theme on National Suicide Prevention Strategies. It is the second most popular theme adopted.

We’ve also found quite a few organisations which have been holding different kinds of suicide prevention programs on a regular basis. However, many of them are not related to the World Suicide Prevention Day. These organizations are mainly from the East Asian and North American regions.

We have also tracked a total of 91 media clippings in English, Chinese, Spanish and Korean. Many of them had quoted the suicide figures from WHO’s press release on WSPD 2004. Some of them reported interesting local case studies in relation to suicide and suicide prevention. For example, the People Daily of China reported the establishment of the 1st Suicide Prevention Hotline in Shanghai and the Daily News of Sri Lanka reported the Sumithrayo Rural Program for suicidal and depressed in rural areas, from where 75% of suicidal cases have been reported.

Other interesting media headlines include the report on “Nunavummiut Walk to celebrate life and living” by CBC in Canada, the feature on “South Africa’s hourly suicides” by BBC News / Africa and “UN Global Drive for Curbing Suicide by Iran Daily in Iran.

There was an interesting story reported by Jim Yardley of New York Times (September 21, 2004) that a guardian angel at his mid 30’s had saved a total of 42 people from jumping off the Yangtze River Bridge. He was neither a government official, nor a professional, but a volunteer who did this out of his good heart in saving precious lives in his neighborhood.

Due to language barriers, we could only capture information from a certain number of languages. We believe more reports and clippings in other languages, such as French, could be captured if we had had the resources to do so. Nevertheless, based on what we have found so far, it is indeed encouraging to notice that the WSPD 2004 has been widely spread out across different parts of the world through the endeavors initiated both by the governments, NGOs and voluntary sectors. Many countries and cities have voiced out their concern for a greater awareness of the magnitude of the problem as well as to address it vigorously with concerted and multi-disciplinary efforts.

It will be a challenge to all of us on how to sustain the success of WSPD in the year to come so as to make people around the world take action in preventing suicide. Such efforts should be generated from countries which haven’t built up the awareness in responding or the resource in preventing the problem. Besides, IASP also calls for a wider spectrum of people across different sectors, cultures or disciplinary to share the responsibilities of saving lives. We are not only in need of improving mental health care, restriction of access to suicide means and more research on the understanding of suicide, but also in need of more loving and caring for people around us who may be in distress and suicidal.

Looking forward to your support for the World Suicide Prevention Day 2005

Frances Y.W. Law
Chair Council of Org. repr.
Dear Colleagues,

Previous symposiums have successfully launched new questions, offered new answers and opened up new horizons on suicidal behaviour. Thus, if we try to stay original, chairing the 11th Symposium on Suicide and Suicidal Behaviour is not an easy task.

Our firm intention to make a step forward and enter new territories is well reflected in the title of the next European Symposium: “Suicide in Europe: From Greenland to Caucasus, from Urals to Gibraltar”.

We plan an inspiring programme, to promote the somehow neglected academic knowledge on suicide and suicidal behaviour in Eastern Europe and make the symposium a bilingual event with Russian as the second official language. Namely the language barrier between English and Russian speaking academics could be accounted for loss of invaluable information on suicide and suicidal behaviour in Europe.

We hope that the 11th Symposium will serve with new brilliant ideas on suicide and suicidal behaviour and ultimately bring together all European suicidologists: from Greenland to Caucasus, and from Urals to Gibraltar.

For further information have a closer look at our website: www.esssb11-slo.org

We hope to spend some pleasant, inspiring and fruitful days with all of you in Portorož - Slovenia in September 2006.

Andrej Marušič
Symposium President

Welcome to
The IASP 2005 Congress,
Durban, South Africa
13 – 16 September 2005

Written by Diego De Leo and Russell Evans of the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention, this state-of-the-art book provides an excellent overview of suicide trends in 33 countries around the world, detailing age and gender group analyses.

Special attention is paid to countries with a national suicide prevention strategy, with a very rich description of all factors to be considered in evaluating the impact of anti-suicide programs.

De Leo, D. / Evans, R.
International Suicide Rates and Prevention Strategies
2004 168 pp. - hardcover
US $29.95 / CAN $44.95 / Euro29.95 (SFr. 52.50 / £19.95)
ISBN: 0-88937-288-8

If anyone has any questions about the institute, please feel free to contact me via the information below. Here is a snippet from the brochure for those unfamiliar with the SRI/SP: "The Summer Research Institute in Suicide Prevention (SRI/SP) is an initiative by the University of Rochester Center for the Study and Prevention of Suicide (UR/CSPS), in conjunction with the National Institute of Mental Health, to train a multidisciplinary array of investigators and develop a cadre of researchers with the skills required to decrease the public health burden of suicide." The deadline for application is February 2, 2005

A L Beautrais Ph D
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