

EAN News

Newsletter of the EPIET Alumni Network



www.epietalum.net

October 2011

Dear EAN Friends,

Oh autumn comes, oh autumn comes,
the squirrels get ready, yes they do,
to gather nuts to get them through.

But it is not only squirrels reaping this years' harvest. Chances are you are holding a paper copy of this newsletter while attending ESCAIDE 2011, where you can reap the harvest of years of intervention epidemiological research and outbreaks. A lot of it will be from EPIET cohorts 15 and 16 and it won't all be EHEC, we promise. There are a couple of nuts buried in this issue, too, such as a muddy encounter in the south of England and an interview with outgoing EPIET chief coordinator Viviane Bremer about her beds, hell and Excalibur. We even have a cameo of Wolverine, but as the feisty Canadian himself would say: 'nuff said!

The EAN Board

Lorenzo, Annick, Marc, Florian, Helen and Chris

EAN Membership

EAN is currently comprised of 280 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.

EAN membership fees

The annual membership fee is €20 and runs from January until December. 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 board (eanboard@gmail.com) in case you want to get information on your membership payment (put in the subject: **membership payment**).

We will shortly send out reminders to members owing 20, 40, 60, 80 and even more than 80 Euros (you know who you are- now!). Please keep an eye on your inbox and help us by paying as soon as possible. We are always happy to assist with information on bank transfers.

For the time being we are using our bank account in Malta. 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).

Name of Bank: HSBC Malta

Account Holder: Epiet Alumni Network

Account number: 85110443451

IBAN: MT41MMEB44853000000085110443451

BIC/Swift: MMEBMTMT *Delete the blanks!*

Sort code: 44853

EAN statutes change

It has been almost a year that we opened the discussion on amending our statutes. We have emailed the board's consensus rewrite of the EAN statutes to you this October. It is the same version that has been up for comments during the past 10 months on:

<http://www.epietalum.net/content/ean-statutes-rewrite> (login required, EAN members only).

The request for comments in our last two newsletters received very little response, so thinking positively we concluded that everyone is happy with the draft.

We would like to put the statutes rewrites to a “yes-no” vote in the general assembly during ESCAIDE 2011. If the simple majority votes “yes” the board would seek to legally change the statutes in 2012.

EAN Democracy

Call for candidates in the EAN Board

We want to draw your attention that during the GA we will hold the elections for three of the positions in the EAN Board. The president and the two treasurers will be elected. If you are an EPIET Alumnus (i.e. current fellows are excluded from the elections) and you are interested to stand for election, please let us know before the GA by emailing eanboard@gmail.com

Viviane, her beds and Excalibur

Viviane Bremer was EPIET Chief Coordinator of the EPIET-programme for the last 3.66 years. Florian Burckhardt interviewed her via email during the Lazareto boot camp for cohort 17. Read on to learn about her, her beds and Excalibur.



EAN: Dear Viviane, how often did you wake up in your own bed during the last three years and 8 months? Give us a mean estimate, please.

Viviane: *What is the case definition of “own bed”?? The one I have in Stockholm, Berlin, or Menorca? Or is this a question on my sexual life?*

EAN: Speaking of travelling, your predecessor Arnold once quipped that he will burn in CO2 hell. Would you have to join him there and should we start praying for you?

Viviane: *I will definitely join and burn. Pleeeease pray for me!!!!*

EAN: Yes, we will. A CO2 prayer-page on facebook for you is in the late planning stage. Apart from travelling quite a bit, you also need to plan a lot for EPIET modules. This becomes even more challenging as the EPIET program expanded and now includes a lot of new national FETP-programs. Can you tell us about the new entrants and how EPIET will cope with maintaining a high quality of training without drowning in module-management?

Viviane: *We feel that maintaining the quality of EPIET is the highest priority. We also need to take into account that EPIET is only partly covering the training needs of the countries and some countries so far have not even benefitted at all from the programme. We have put a lot of thoughts on how keep the quality while expanding the scope of EPIET.*

For example, to keep the groups small, we organise most modules for one cohort only. Since this means that we need to organise more modules, we have agreed with the EPIET-associated programmes (EAP), namely, Germany, the UK, Norway and Austria contribute proportionally to the organisation of these. This means that for some modules, the EAP will be in charge, with support from us. This arrangement will help us keeping our workload manageable while maintaining the a high quality and a lively network.

EAN: That looks like a viable strategy. So we can expect more mud-modules, > erm Rapid-Assessment modules during music festivals in the south of England (see “Stories from the Fields” in the next section). What role do you see for EAN in maintaining EPIET-quality or manning the modules?

Viviane: *So far, we have been able to invite many EAN members to facilitate in or modules, since many of them are now EPIET supervisors. This is especially the case for the “introductory course”, computer tools in outbreak investigations” and the “project review” modules. For some of the modules, however, we need people with specific experience, for example in advanced statistics or international health.*

We are aware that some alumni do have this specific experience, but we may not be aware of all expertise available among the alumni. EAN might have a better

overview on the alumni's expertise and competencies.¹ Here I could see a role of EAN to advise us on who we could ask to facilitate in more technical modules such as "multivariable analysis", "times series analysis", "vaccinology" etc..

We also have highly appreciated the role of EAN in the selection of new fellows and will certainly try to continue this collaboration. I am sure that EAN can contribute to EPIET in many other aspects and we should try to explore them together with the new EPIET Chief coordinator, Yvan Hutin.

EAN: Yvan Hutin will take the EPIET helm soon. He contributed, among other things, to the CDC FETP Core Curriculum Guide and the WHO Communicable Disease Control Field Manual and wrote the practical FETP guide for a scientific manuscript. We are keen to meet him on ESCAIDE!

Back to yourself: what do you see as your greatest EPIET achievement during your spell as chief coordinator and what is your wish for Yvan except for having many beds in many places?

Viviane: First of all, the development of EPIET is certainly not my achievement alone but the result of the work of the EPIET coordinator team and the ECDC training section. EPIET has always faced big challenges. But a lot has been achieved in the last years. First, we have been able to increase the number of fellows trained through EPIET. Second, by creation of the Member-State (MS-)track we are now trying to respond much more to the training needs of countries that have so far not benefitted from EPIET. Also, we are trying to increase the collaboration between epidemiologists and public health microbiologists through the European Public Health Microbiology Programme (EUPHEM).

For example, cohort 13 consisted of 15 EPIET fellows and 9 fellows from EAP (like Germany, Norway...). The new cohort 17 has increased to 40 fellows, with 17 EPIET "EU-track" fellows (the traditional EPIET, with fellows moving to a different country), 7 MS-track, 12 EAP and 4 EUPHEM fellows. Thus, EPIET has become more diversified.

The largest achievement for myself is to see fellows developing their skills in field epidemiology. It is really a great satisfaction for me to see that so many EPIET fellows continue to contribute to the control of infectious diseases in Europe after graduation, to meet them again as supervisors, coordinators...

I am sure that Yvan will be able to use his long international experience to optimise the programme.

¹ As our EAN members and regular readers probably know, they can simply edit their profile on the EAN website and add their expertise and competencies. That would aid the board in finding competent facilitators...)

I wish him to enjoy the job as much as I did (and to have a good light treatment for the dark Swedish winter).

EAN: That would have been a beautiful closing statement, if it hadn't been for our last question.

As you surely know, your namesake in the Arthurian Legends, Viviane the Lady of the Lake, gave King Arthur his magical sword Excalibur. He and his knights went on many quests and adventures that were the direct or indirect work of the sorceress Morgan le Fay, another strong female figure of the legends.

Do you see yourself more as the Lady of the Lake, equipping fellows with epi-equivalents of Excalibur or as Morgan le Fay, raising challenges and trials that fellows have to meet in order to become true Epi-Knights?

Viviane: *It never occurred to me, but now that you say it, I would say Lady of the Lake ;-)*

EAN: Thank you for the interview, my lady !

Mud

Anoek Backx and Giovanna Jaramillo Gutierrez

We, as EPIET (European Program for Intervention Epidemiology Training) and EUPHEM (European Public Health Microbiology) fellows, know how to pack our bags. Generally speaking. Our two-year programs are stuffed with weeklong training modules in the most attractive cities of Europe: Rome, Paris, Athens, Stockholm, Madrid...to name a few. Instead of going to London, our most recent module took place in Bristol. Bristol?? Bristol. Lovely small town as it turned out to be, to teach us about Rapid Assessments in Emergency situations and Mass Gatherings. Think: refugee camps after natural disasters or war situations, think: the Olympic Games, UEFA cup...etc

As we said...we know how to pack our bags. This time, however, the information sent to us beforehand mentioned preparing for bad weather conditions, meaning to bring appropriate footwear: some of us brought hiking boots, some of us brought old sneakers.

After a few days of lectures and case studies, we were explained how to use a GPS. Sounds trivial doesn't it? In the era of smartphones, iPads, TomToms one would think GPS dates of prehistoric times. Well, not so trivial... We had to walk along the charming streets of Bristol (a rather short silly walk) to test if we could unravel the GPS' mysteries. We were lured into walking this bit with a waiting 'surprise' at the end. The only surprise awaiting us at the end was a corner of a street with closed shops at that hour of the day and... our fellow fellows. No

expected pub for an expected and well deserved free beer! So much for surprises.

The real surprise came on Thursday: as schoolchildren we picked up our lunch-packs once we had identified ours after recognising our funnily misspelled names, and got hurdled into a touring bus. Some final instructions along the way 'sit with your own group', rainclouds gathering, first drops coming down, some anxious looks out of the window....it was pouring rain upon arrival. NOW we understood the need for 'appropriate footwear'. Plastic bags were gathered from wherever possible to wrap around our shoes and sneakers. Only the truly intelligent fellows had really understood the preparation indications and were putting on their WELLIES!!

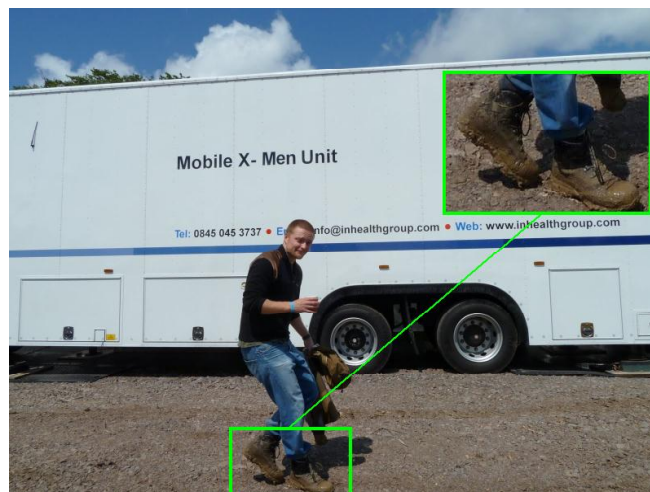
And off we went....slipping and sliding through the biggest mudpool we have ever seen in our entire lives. There are people spending hundreds of GBPs to be allowed to CAMP in it...year after year!

After an hour of shoveling through this cowshit smelling mudpool...our groups reached our destinations: GPS coordinates at the campsites throughout the terrain of Glastonbury festival!!! Some of us have always had the wish to come here once, not on the day before the start of the actual festival though!!! Anyways, with our groups we did what we were asked to do: measuring and setting out squares starting from the given GPS coordinates, counting the tents inside the square while trying not to stumble over tent picks and lines...to be extrapolated for an estimation of the population size onsite...and spreading our arms wide to 'walke' our famous T-squares! The festival campsite turned out to be our proxy for a refugee camp.

With mud up to our *&@#%.... we made our way to the hospital tent, to get introduced in the tremendous organisation for such an event. We did some role plays to understand how to obtain health related information for both primary health care and public health, during such a mass gathering. Than some of us made our slippery way to the Pyramid stage....to lie down on the only patch of grass (still!) around with even the sun coming through while nipping beer from a paper cup, enjoying an imaginary band playing great songs from that famous stage...being here on the pre-festival day was not bad at all!

We tried out the Longdrop and the portable toilets, and learned that the UK simply does not have enough portable toilets for Glastonbury to take place at the same time of the Olympics in 2012!!

So...our recommendation is, if you ever get to go to Glastonbury: bring a GPS, tape, wellies and ...your own portable toilet.



Wolverine incognito, drinking coffee

- November 1-5 2011, 10th International Conference on Urban Health - ICUH 2011, Belo Horizonte City, Brazil
- November 2-5 2011, 12th International Union Against Sexually Transmitted Infection World Congress, New Delhi, India
- November 29-Dec02 2011, EPIDEMICS³ - The Third International Conference on Infectious Disease Dynamics, Boston, USA
- November 29 2011, Fifth Netherlands Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Prevention and Treatment (NCHIV), Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- December 7-8 2011, ISDS 10th anniversary, Atlanta, USA
- December 11-16 2011, 4th AFENET Scientific Conference, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- March 11-14 2012, International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases, Atlanta, USA

For an update on relevant conferences and events being held internationally with some relevance to field epidemiology, please regularly check the EAN website for details:

<http://epietalum.net/conferences>

We are looking forward to seeing you all in Stockholm for the 5th edition of ESCAIDE!



Lorenzo Pezzoli (EAN Board)

Like every year, EAN is involved in the organization of the European Scientific Conference on Applied Infectious Disease Epidemiology (ESCAIDE), which will take place in Stockholm between the 6th and 8th November 2011. Over 100 oral presentations and 180 posters will be delivered at the conference, in 5 plenary, 21 parallel and 2 poster sessions.

The keynote opening address, "Infectious disease control in complex emergency situations", will be delivered by Dr Marie Pierre Allié, the President of MSF France, who will talk about the difficulties of translating data into public health action; a challenge that, as public health professionals, we encounter on a regular basis no matter where in the World we work. Other plenary sessions will deal with "Parasitic infections of increasing relevance for Europe", "The Hospital as an infectious disease amplifier", "Enhancing health and health equality through vaccination programmes".

The last session of the conference will be a much anticipated plenary session on the STEC/HUS outbreak that hit Germany and the rest of Europe earlier this year.

As per tradition, the conference will be closed by the ESCAIDE gala dinner including the very well deserved award ceremony of EPIET Cohort 15 and EUPHEM Cohort 2.

As usual ESCAIDE will see many EAN-related activities. We have continued the tradition of the "Travel Grants" and we will sponsor 7 colleagues from Armenia, India, Portugal, Niger, Nigeria, and Romania to present their work at the conference.

In addition, like last year, we will assign a prize to the two (one oral and one poster) presentations that are most effective in transmitting a public health message. This initiative was started last year by the former EAN Presidents in occasion of the 15 years of EPIET. Since it was a great success, we plan to repeat it. To assign the prize, we are creating an EAN prize committee, made by EAN members that are not part of the graduating or current cohorts, which will judge the oral and poster presentations. We are still looking for volunteers for the committee, so if you are interested in spending a bit of time during the parallel sessions for oral presentations and poster presentations 'judging' them for the EAN prize, then please let us know!

Finally, do not forget to attend the 2011 EAN General Assembly, which is planned on Monday, 7 November, from 18:00 to 20:00 in the ESCAIDE Conference Auditorium.

Episurveyor

Contributed by Curtis Broderick, Epiconcept

Episurveyor (www.episurveyor.org) is a web-based survey creation and data storage system for data collection via telephones. It is a product of Datadyne company. Created in 2003 by Joel Selanikio, former CDC epidemiologist, the goal was to use popularly available cheap cell phones with questionnaires on-board, and transmit the responses to a central server via phone data transmission or by SMS if the former is not included in the phone service contract. First used in Kenya, it is now in use in 160 countries. Its application is primarily in medicine, health and agriculture in developing countries, its motto is to "make paper forms a thing of the past."

For small projects, it is free to use (Maximum 20 different surveys and maximum 500 responses per form). Data is stored (and easily accessible) on Datadyne's rackspace.com rented platform.

The tools available in EpiSurveyor are:

- Designer - to create your questionnaire using 7 different variable types including GPS coordinates (if the telephone has the functionality),
- Data listing - to see individual data records,
- Data analysis - to get basic pie and bar charts with means, frequencies, mins, and maxes,
- Mapping -cartography to view the data collection points and
- sharing - to allow colleagues to view data records.

There are client applications available for download for some 50 phones including an Android telephone client based on the Open Data Kit "collect" software.

You can find a downloadable presentation here at a recent EpiConcept training for mobile data acquisition systems which gives an overview of a variety of web and mobile survey technologies.

<http://tinyurl.com/ecppt01>



(*abstract submission relief, **coordinator abstract enhancements, drawing by Esther, text Florian).

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