Meeting Report

10th Annual Symposium on Complementary Health Care

Royal College of Physicians, London, UK, November 21–22, 2003

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General Organization

This is only a capsule report and is not meant to be exhaustive. For further information visit <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/FACT/sympo>. Professor Edzard Ernst, Director, Complementary Medicine (Peninsula Medical School, Universities of Exeter and Plymouth, UK) served as Chairman. There was a Local Scientific Organizing Committee, an International Scientific Organizing Committee, several sponsors, and a main sponsor—**HERBALIFE**.

Pertinent Publications

The registration fees offered the usual packets and two other unique publications: Volume 8, Issue 4, December 2003 of *Focus on Alternative and Complementary Therapies (FACT) — an evidence-based approach*, published by Pharmaceutical Press. We also received a voluminous and thorough compendium (2000 pages): *Natural Medicines, Comprehensive Database* Fifth Edition: compiled by the editors of Pharmacist's Letter and Prescriber's Letter, published by Therapeutic Research Faculty, 3120 W. March Lane, P. O. Box 8190 Stockton, CA 95208, USA; Tel: (209) 472–2244; Fax: (209) 472–2249.

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Satellite Meetings

Proceedings began on Thursday, November 20, 2003, with two satellite meetings: **Nutritional and Herbal Approaches to Obesity**. Three members of the editorial board, *Evidence-based Complementary and Alternative Medicine (eCAM)* (www.ecamjournal.com), participated: Edzard Ernst; David Heber (UCLA Center for Human Nutrition) presented on **The international obesity epidemic**; and Mary Hardy (UCLA Center for Dietary Supplement Research in Botanicals) presented on **Herbal approaches to obesity**. Edzard

Ernst chaired the speakers' session and Janice Thompson, Herbalife International, chaired the lively discussion. There were some interesting questions posed by medical students; they were indeed pleased to have an opportunity to attend, notably the students of Anthony Pac-Soo Peninsula Medical School. Marja J. Verhoef (University of Calgary, Canada) chaired the **Second Annual International Workshop on Research Methods for the Investigation of CAM Whole Systems**. She was elected as the first president of the newly formed International Society of Complementary Medicine Research. (See Saturday afternoon session.)

Keynote Speakers

Morning and afternoon sessions always began with a keynote speaker.

Continuity of Care—a Secret Ingredient of Success

Date: Friday, November 21, 2003 (Morning session)

Presenter: Sir Denis Pereira Gray, University of Exeter, The Nuffield Trust, UK

Phytomedicine in the 21st Century: New Developments and Challenges (Varro Tyler Memorial Lecture)

Date: Friday, November 21, 2003 (Afternoon session)

Presenter: Hildebert Wagner, University of Munich, Germany; supported by Dr Willmar Schwabe Pharmaceuticals, Germany

Natural Health Products Regulation: Research to Legislation

Date: Saturday, November 22, 2003 (Morning session)

Presenter: Philip Waddington, Health Canada

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Scientific Sessions

Morning and Afternoon sessions were held with usually at least five speakers, interspersed with coffee breaks and poster sessions and lunch that preceded the afternoon sessions.

The first Friday morning session was **Randomized clinical trials: The placebo needle, is it a valid and convincing control for use in acupuncture trials?—a randomized, single blind, crossover pilot trial** by Peter White (University of Southampton, UK; member of the *eCAM* editorial board). The other session was entitled **Manual therapies**, chaired by Marja Verhoef and Peter Canter (Peninsula Medical School, Exeter, UK). After the coffee break and poster session, Janice Thompson and Edzard Ernst chaired the second session: **Herbal medicine**, supported by Herbalife International. Following this, Mary Hardy (David Geffen School of Medicine, USA), member of the editorial board *eCAM*, presented the work from her group (on behalf of Navindra P. Seeram who was unable to attend) entitled **Application of new chemical profiling technique for characterization and quality control of botanical products: multidimensional profiling**. This presentation offered highly technical and state-of-the-art approaches to meeting quality standards for botanical products. Chemical profiling techniques, which are capable of analyzing an entire mixture rather than only the major known chemical markers were employed and yielded compelling results. This technology is crucial and of potential importance to those wishing to delve into the use of products from marine and terrestrial animals, a neglected area in CAM. The third morning session was devoted entirely to acupuncture: **Acupuncture for chronic pain syndromes**. This session was organized and chaired by Dieter Melchart and Stefan Willich (Technical University of Munich and Charite University Medical Center, Berlin, Germany). The four afternoon sessions were entitled **Safety; Safeguarding innovative research without patent production** (organized by Dr Willmar, Schwabe Pharmaceuticals, Germany); **Pain**; and **Cancer**.

The Saturday morning sessions included **Mind-body interventions**, chaired by Sara Warber and Max H. Pittler (Peninsula Medical School, Exeter, UK). One especially interesting lecture was followed by a clamorous demand for a musical demonstration: *Sacred/shamanic music and trauma related disorders—an experimental research*, presented by Lenore Wiand (Complementary and Alternative Research Center, University of Michigan, USA). Her study analyzed the effects of listening to a particular music played on a Native American flute on self-reports of anxiety and perceptions of interconnectedness of individuals diagnosed with dissociative disorders. According to the conclusions, this music appears to be a significant non-invasive adjunct treatment modality for trauma-related diagnoses and other populations affected by trauma. The ethno-musicological, cross-cultural, psychological and spiritual implications appeared highly significant. The second morning session was entitled **Methodological issues**. Following the coffee break and poster session,

the other morning sessions included **Homoeopathy**, organized by the Faculty of Homoeopathy, UK, and **Evidence-based patient choice in complementary medicine**, organized by the Research Council for Complementary Medicine, UK. Following the business meeting, four sessions were held in the afternoon that rounded up the symposium: **Qualitative research; Education; Natural Medicine** (organized by the European Society of Classical Natural Medicine) and **Why regulate?** (organized by the Prince of Wales's Foundation for Integrated Health, UK.)

International Society of Complementary Medicine Research

The Saturday afternoon session included a 30-minute informal session devoted to the Foundation of the International Society of Complementary Medicine Research (ISCMR), chaired by Sara Warber and Edzard Ernst. There was a unanimous vote for establishing the International Society. Candidates who agreed to stand for election as first officers were given a chance to offer a very brief campaign speech, followed by the voting. The ballot results were as follows: **Marja J. Verhoef** (University of Calgary) was elected President; **George Lewith** (University of Southampton), President-Elect; **Sara Warber** (University of Michigan), Secretary; and **Suzanna Zick** (University of Michigan), Treasurer. Applications for Charter Members were accepted, and Sara Warber compiled a list of assured volunteers who will be members of the future Governing Board. This group will assist the officers in determining policy, for example, framing a constitution, dues, meeting venues and adoption of a scientific peer-reviewed journal as the official organ of the society.

An Opinion

As an immunobiologist, having published works on antimicrobial and anticancer molecules in invertebrates and neuroimmune systems, I attended this symposium for the first time with an open mind and to promote our new journal—*Evidence-based Complementary and Alternative Medicine, eCAM*, that will be published in Spring 2004. Some presentations were perplexing because they appeared as anecdotal information. Clearly, there is a need for intellectual rigor and approaches to claims that will serve to dispel certain misconceptions and negative opinions. Many studies can now evolve from the purely qualitative and non-experimental to embrace techniques including statistics that will render the approaches more analytical and scientific. Surely, in the future, there will be a gradual amalgam of Western approaches to medicine with complementary and alternative adjuncts. It was reassuring that questions posed to the speakers revealed their awareness of shortcomings and the need to move toward more rigor.