President’s column:
Happy Birthday to ASPHER!

EUPHA’s sister association in the multidisciplinary field of public health, the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region, is celebrating its 40th anniversary. ASPHER has served the European public health community during a period of dramatic and demanding change—unprecedented expansion, increasing complexity and growing unity as well as diversity. ASPHER has contributed to the development of a European public health. As this year’s president of EUPHA I am honoured to thank and congratulate our ASPHER colleagues and friends very warmly.

The two Associations share responsibility for capacity building in European public health and for providing the European public health community and the general public with a clear vision and perspective of the public’s health. Both ASPHER and EUPHA share responsibility for developing two of the most basic resources for public health capacities in the 21st century. ASPHER’s raison d’être and mission is to advise and assist academic institutions to offer high-quality education and training programmes for public health professionals working in policy development, practice and research. EUPHA’s remit, on the other hand, is to guide and support the development of an adequate knowledge base serving the needs both of policy and practice through multidisciplinary research. Both associations will serve the European public health best if their share a common value and knowledge base grounded in sound research and scientific discourse.

During the last years public health leaders, scientists and practitioners have entered a debate on the values and principles guiding policy making, scientific research and organisational practice. It centres on value-related themes such as health and health improvement, equity and social justice, social cohesion and solidarity, responsiveness to health and disease-related needs, acceptability and efficiency of health services, governance and financial sustainability.

We have learned that the values and principles underlying these themes tend to be in conflict with each other—we cannot have them all! The challenge is to analyse their respective pay-offs and compromise on an acceptable balance between conflicting values and principles such as equity and financial sustainability, responsiveness to needs and demands in health promotion/prevention or health care.

Public health is in a phase of rapid and in some areas fundamental transition. Expert opinion about the directions and perspectives of future health systems differ widely. The spectrum ranges from a cautious prediction of a well-managed healthcare system optimising the use of increasingly scarce resources to the idea of a post-modern health society seeing health as central societal value, as a human right and an overarching goal in all policies.

Capacity building in European public health research and knowledge development and in professional education and training as well must serve a wide range of public health perspectives, including public health medicine at one end and comprehensive public health at the other. Thus our capacity building efforts must accommodate a wide range of values and principles guiding the two of the key areas of capacity building in the field.

In sharing responsibility for an enormous challenge both EUPHA and ASPHER would benefit from each other by building stronger partnerships. They should organise a constructive dialogue about the value and knowledge bases of the future European public health.

EUPHA who still is in its adolescence wishes her mature sister ASPHER another successful 40 years!

Horst Noack
EUPHA President

References
EUPHA conferences, will develop the project and facilitate exchange of information and findings between partners and stakeholders.

By undertaking this study, we hope to:

- create discussion between public health research with researchers, practitioners, research funders, policy makers, and wider stakeholders;
- review performance of past public health research in Europe;
- reflect on and promote cross-national public health research and the EU Seventh Framework Research Programme;
- give attention to accession countries and global trends;
- strengthen networks, including access and dissemination, and prepare publications.

SPHERE is divided into work-packages distributed among the partners, and are broadly grouped as follows, being undertaken include the following:

- bibliographic literature reviews, on health services research, environmental protection, genetic epidemiology, health management, communicable disease control and health promotion;
- descriptions of structures and perceptions from ministries of health and research, European institutions, non-governmental organizations, researchers and allied research organisations; and
- development of dialogue to promote a shared agenda and more closely match research needs of policymakers with capacity of the European public health research community.

Workshops/Meetings

To date, SPHERE has held several workshops and meetings.

- Scarborough, June 2005: Workshop on Methodologies. A paper has been accepted for the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health—details from Aileen Clarke (aileen.clark@phru.nhs.uk);
- EUPHA Conference, Graz, November 2005: Partner ‘kick-off’ pre-meeting and Conference workshops discussing the project;
- Chantilly, France, March 2006, a partner meeting to discuss progress made with the literature reviews and bibliometric analyses, and to discuss progress towards the Montreux conference; and
- Brussels, Belgium, May 2006, a partner meeting to discuss surveys of stakeholder organisations. Discussion centered on methods we could employ to increase responses as well as the ‘consultation’ phase of the project.

Further activities planned include:

- London, September 2006 will be a meeting with the EUPHA Past-Presidents forum, to plan how EUPHA can maintain links with public health research commissioners at European and Member State levels;
- EUPHA conference Montreux, November 2006, there will be a Partners meeting (on the Wednesday) followed by two open workshops for EUPHA members:
  - Partners in the ‘Literature Review’ Group will be presenting the major findings from their research, and Aileen Clarke and Olivier Grimaud will describe the bibliometric approach. Peer review assessments will be made by Charles Normand (Ireland) and Finn Kamper-Jorgensen (Denmark) and there will be discussion with EUPHA conference participants; and
  - The second will involve presentations from Kevin McCarthy (DG Research), describing the forthcoming EU Seventh Framework Research Programme 2007–2013, and Michel Pletschette (PHEA) describing the current Sanco public health programme. There will also be presentations from researchers in fields of Patient Safety, and Ageing, discussing on ways to develop Europe-wide public health intervention research; and
- A preliminary report circulated to stakeholders in European institutions and member states is planned for 2007 with the final results of the SPHERE project presented at the Helsinki EUPHA meeting.

The future

The broader objective of SPHERE is to assist creating an ‘European Public Health Research Area’. Public health research will be strengthened by greater engagement between the research community, policy-makers and research funders, and this needs to be embedded in a culture of dialogue for European public health research.

We wish to encourage national health and research agencies to review their programmes, and to develop agendas which match needs for public health evidence, to demonstrate implementation and to collect outcomes which complete the policy cycle. By increasing the profile of public health research in Europe, this study will also support the public health in the EU Seventh Framework Research Programme 2007–2013.

Update on the 2006 EUPHA Conference

The EUPHA conference 2006 is a very complete programme and offers:

A scientific programme with 66 parallel sessions

The scientific programme will offer you a wide range of Public Health issues. There will be tracks with 6 parallel sessions each to the following themes:

- ‘Life style and other determinants of Health’
- Infectious diseases
- Inequalities in Health
- Health System and Health Policy
- Child and adolescent public health
- Social Security and health
- Health services research and quality of care
- Health promotion
- International health
- Chronic diseases and care for the elderly

We invite you to choose your favourite parallel session already in the registration form on the website. This will allow us to find the right room size for each session.

Several pre-conference activities on Wednesday 15 and Thursday morning 16

It is worthwhile to come to Montreux already on Wednesday November 15th, as we have planned a very interesting pre-conference programme from Wednesday morning to Thursday noon. You have the choice among the following activities:

On Wednesday 15 November: Pre-conferences:

- Research on sickness absence and mental health—recent progress in theory and methods.
- Migrant health: Migration and Health in Switzerland (AM); Methodological aspects of research among migrants (PM).
- ‘R U Effective? Meeting the health needs of young people.’
— ‘Health literacy: The need of a European Survey
— Training seminars:
— Health services research and policy
— To publish research results
— Public health publishing in Europe
— Guided Visits
— WHO-Headquarters in Geneva
— Nestlé Nutrition Research Center in Lausanne
On Thursday 16 November
— Round Table ‘New Vaccines— New Public Health Paradigms’
— Round Table ‘Nutrition at school— what can be done’
— Workshop: academic Collaborative Centres for public health: ‘University and Public Health Departments are shaking hands’
— Workshop on Training of future Public Health Professionals.
— Side conference: ‘New frontiers in the prevention of infections, allergies and asthma’.

Several side and breakfast meetings
During the main conference several side meetings will be held. Among them are:
— a meeting on electronic child records (Thursday evening)
— Controlling the transmission chain of food-borne zoonic disease (breakfast meeting Friday)
— Mental health in Europe (breakfast meeting on Friday).
Regular updates can be found on www.eupha.org.

Social programme and visits in the Montreux region
For the conference dinner on Friday night there will be a limited number of places. Please register early enough, if you want to participate. Don’t miss a visit to the beautiful region of Montreux. On the website you will find several proposal for excursions. On Friday 17 November, the Tourist office of Montreux will be at the conference with a information booth.

Order your official conference T-Shirt
For the first time you can order a official conference T-shirt—a great souvenir, also available in sizes for your kids! Order it directly on the website with your registration log-in.
Markus Kaufmann
Local Organising Committee 2006

WHO/EURO COLUMN: STRENGTHENING EUROPE’S RESPONSE TO ITS LEADING CONDITIONS

Europe is at a critical juncture. Already the main cause of death and disability in Europe, noncommunicable, also called chronic, diseases (NCD) pose a significant threat to future well-being. With an ageing population, increasing urbanization, rising health and social care costs and worrying trends in major risk factors, the NCD challenge requires urgent and sustained attention.

It is time for a reality check. The bulk of deaths (86%) and disease burden (77%) in the WHO European Region is caused by NCD but the response is disproportionate. Cardiovascular disease (CVD) alone causes more than half (52%) the deaths across the WHO European Region, with stroke or heart disease the leading killer in virtually all 52 Member States. In some countries, 40% of the population may be living with chronic conditions, with 70–80% of health care costs allocated to their care; adding in the wider costs to society through lower household income, lost productivity and early retirement results in a significant economic impact.

It is time for a reorientation of health systems. While population-wide prevention and public health programmes offer the most sustainable long-term strategies for tackling NCD, these receive only 3% of total health expenditure in OECD countries: most spending goes instead on ‘sick care’. Health services are frequently oriented towards care rather than prevention, health promoting opportunities are lost, and health workers are not equipped for the more chronic, patient-oriented models of care.

It is time to close the ‘know-do’ gap. Effective interventions exist and can be applied in even the most resource-poor countries. If major risk factors were eliminated, it is estimated that 80% of heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes, and 40% of cancer, could be avoided. But while striking success has been demonstrated in some countries, not all share in the benefits. Gaps are growing within and between countries. There is a significant social gradient for NCD mortality and morbidity and there is an almost 20-year gap in healthy life expectancy emerging between some parts of Eastern and Western Europe. There is great potential for health and economic gain. The European Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases debated at
the 56th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe during September 2006 provides an opportunity for countries to take stock, review their current approaches and strengthen their efforts. Building on previous commitments,7–11 the Strategy aims to combine integrated action on risk factors and determinants across sectors with efforts to strengthen health systems toward improved prevention and control. While all countries of the WHO European Region are different in terms of NCD challenge, resource and capacity levels, it is possible for all to respond effectively.

Jill Farrington
Coordinator, Noncommunicable Diseases
WHO Regional Office for Europe

References