

ISPM News Archive 2009

03.11.2009 08:27

ISPM director joins National Research Council

Matthias Egger was elected to the National Research Council of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).



The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) is mandated by the federal government to support research in all disciplines, from philosophy and biology to the nanosciences and medicine. Established in 1952 as a foundation under private law, the SNSF annually supports some 7,000 researchers with approximately CHF 600 million. The National Research Council of the SNSF evaluates research projects and awards grants. The Council consists of scientists, most of whom work at Swiss universities. Matthias Egger was elected to the Division of Medicine and Biology of the Council (Division III) where he will join nine colleagues in section B who evaluate projects in clinical, preventive and social medicine.

Links:

- [Press release \(in German\)](#)
- [Swiss National Science Foundation](#)

03.11.2009 08:05

Major grant from Arco Foundation

A musculoskeletal research program led by Dr Stephan Reichenbach and Professors Peter Jüni and Peter Villiger from ISPM and the Department of Rheumatology, Clinical Immunology and Allergology will receive major funding for a duration of five years. The program aims at evaluating various interventions in osteoarthritis.



Osteoarthritis is the most common form of joint disease and the leading cause of pain and physical disability in older people. Existing pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions for osteoarthritis are insufficient. Pain relief remains a primary and only partially met medical need with problems around safety, tolerability and enhanced efficacy.

The program includes randomized-controlled trials, meta-analyses and methodological studies to improve treatment strategies for patients with osteoarthritis. Several interventions will be evaluated, including TENS, exercise, viscosupplementation, and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. The program will be conducted by an interdisciplinary team, involving clinical epidemiologists, rheumatologists, physiotherapists, and biostatisticians. Results will help to improve our understanding of the current evidence base of osteoarthritis therapy.

[Arco Foundation](#)

28.10.2009 15:45

Meta-analysis Winter School in the Bernese Alps

ISPM is organising an advanced course on “Systematic Reviews in the Health Sciences: Meta-Analysis in Context” in Wengen, 18-22 January, 2010.



In recent years there has been increasing focus on formal methods of systematically reviewing studies, to produce explicitly formulated, reproducible summaries of the effects of health care interventions, lifestyle exposures and genetic exposures. This one-week intensive course is aimed at researchers and health care professionals who want to perform state-of-the-art systematic reviews and meta-analyses of clinical trials and observational studies. The course will cover advanced topics, including dose-response meta-analysis, meta-analysis of individual patient data, mixed comparisons and meta-analysis of diagnostic test accuracy studies. Course participants will gain practical experience in performing advanced meta-analyses using the Stata software package. The course will be held 18-22 January, 2010 in Wengen, in the heart of the Jungfrau region. Faculty will include Professors Matthias Egger, Jonathan Sterne, Peter Juni and others.

Links:

- [Outline of Course, Fees and Registration](#) (pdf, 2MB)
- [Registration form](#) (doc, 90kB)
- [Stata Data Analysis and Statistical Software](#)
- [The Jungfrau Region](#)

26.10.2009 09:20

ISPM cancer research wins award

A research group led by ISPM's Matthias Egger is one of three winners of the SWISS BRIDGE AWARD 2009.



The group (Julia Bohlius, Kerri Clough and Matthias Egger), together with collaborators in Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe will conduct epidemiological, health services and clinical research to inform prevention and care of HIV/AIDS-related cancers (Kaposi Sarcoma, Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and cervical cancer) in southern Africa, to increase the capacity for delivering combination antiretroviral treatment (cART) and cancer treatment, and ultimately to improve the prognosis of people living with HIV-related cancers in southern Africa. This project will build on previous HIV/AIDS related projects within a large network of clinics in the region, the International epidemiological Databases to Evaluate AIDS in Southern Africa ([leDEA-SA](#)).

[SWISS BRIDGE](#) is a charitable foundation based in Switzerland, which supports cancer research in Switzerland and abroad. The other recipients of the 2009 Swiss Bridge Award are Wilhelm Krek from ETH Zurich and Stephen C. West from Cancer Research, UK, London.

[Press releases in German and English](#)

09.09.2009 09:51

New Professor for Medical Sociology and Social Epidemiology at the ISPM

Matthias Richter has been appointed to the position of Assistant Professor for Medical Sociology and Social Epidemiology at the ISPM, funded by the SSPH+.



He started his new position in July 2009 and is supporting the Division of Social and Behavioural Health Research (SBHR), which is interested in the role of social, cultural and psychological factors for health and illness.

Matthias Richter was born in 1971 and has studied sociology, psychology and economics at the University of Bielefeld, Germany. With his dissertation on “Health and health behaviour in adolescence: The influence of social inequality”, he earned his doctoral degree in Sociology in 2004. His postdoctoral lecture qualification in Public Health (Habilitation) followed in 2009 at the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Bielefeld. Before coming to Bern Matthias Richter acted as deputy professor for Prevention and Health Promotion at the University of Bielefeld. He is associated with several social- and health-science communities. As the former deputy director of the WHO Collaboration Centre for Child and Adolescent Health Promotion, he has long-term experience in the field of empirical health research. He is also a member in various national and international associations in medical sociology and has published numerous scientific papers and books.

Matthias Richter’s research interests lie in the field of explaining and reducing socioeconomic differences in health as well as in international child- and adolescent health research. More recently he has taken an active interest in life course perspectives on social inequalities in health and the cooperation between social and natural sciences. In his new function he will contribute to public health research and teaching at University of Bern and the SSPH+. At the ISPM his research will focus explicitly on the questions which determinants and mechanisms over the life course are responsible for socioeconomic inequalities in health and what can be done to reduce these inequalities in health.

Links:

- [CH-X](#)
- [Swiss National Cohort](#)
- [HBSC](#)

31.07.2009 07:03

Vaginal practices, microbicides and HIV

A symposium at the International AIDS Society Conference in Cape Town on 20.07.2009 addressed this topic. ISPM researchers presented results from NIH-funded meta-ethnographic and individual person data meta-analysis studies, together with presentations of a multi-country survey of vaginal practices and a new study on vaginal inflammatory cytokines and biomarkers.



The symposium was co-chaired by Dr. Gina Brown, Office of AIDS Research, NIH, USA and Prof Marleen Temmerman, International Centre for Reproductive Health, University of Gent, Belgium. Dr. Janneke van de Wijgert, Academic Medical Centre Amsterdam, The Netherlands synthesised the presentations and their relevance for future research on vaginal microbicides to prevent HIV infection was discussed by a panel of experts: Dr. Landon Myer, Dr. Jo-Ann Passmore, Prof Helen Rees, and Dr. Sengeziwe Sibeko from South Africa and Dr. Zeda Rosenberg from the USA.

- [Flyer symposium](#)

01.07.2009 10:03

Symposium on the Occasion of the retirement of Christoph Minder

The presentations of the speakers can be found here.



- Matthias Egger, Bern: [Health inequalities in Switzerland: Notes on a pioneer](#)
- Christoph Minder, Bern: [Looking back on 26 years of research on Swiss health inequalities](#)
- Andreas Mielck, Munich: [Health inequalities in Germany: new findings](#)
- Jean-Daniel Rainhorn, Geneva: [Health inequalities: some global perspectives](#)
- Matthias Bopp, Zurich: [Legacy and persistence: The Swiss National Cohort](#)
- Bruna Galobardes, Bristol: [Health inequalities in the UK: new findings](#)
- Adrian Spörri, Bern: [Tax and death: where \(not\) to live in Switzerland](#)

Thank you very much for a very interesting day.

22.05.2009 16:08

Communication skills can be improved by training

Communication Skills Trainings are part of the mandatory training curriculum for oncologists in Switzerland. A systematic review conducted by Jürgen Barth and Patricia Lannen showed empirical evidence for improved skills after participation. These results were presented at a consensus meeting of the Swiss Cancer League and an agenda for the coming years was drafted.



See [report of the NZZ](#).

The project included the analysis of 13 primary studies and found evidence of small to moderate effects on health care professional's communication behavior and their attitudes towards the care of seriously ill patients and some evidence that improved communication skills may contribute to lower levels of distress in patients.

This meta-analysis provided the scientific bases for the consensus conference, hosted by the Swiss Cancer League at the monastery of Kappel at the beginning of May 2009. This conference included some of the leading European experts in the field, who came together in order to draft a recommendation for the future developments of Communication Skills Trainings in Oncology in Switzerland.

The meta-analysis concluded that while the effects of the trainings are moderate, application of these trainings can be recommended from a scientific point of view.

However, in order to optimize feasibility and use of resources, the ideal length and format of these trainings still needs to be established, health professionals, which particularly benefit from the training identified and the range of benefits for patients better understood.

[Picture credit](#)

13.05.2009 07:03

Symposium zur Emeritierung von Christoph Minder

Anlässlich der Pensionierung von Christoph Minder wird am 25. Juni ein Symposium stattfinden:



Ungleiche Verteilung der Gesundheit in unserer Gesellschaft, ein Thema, das am Institut seit je einen grossen Stellenwert hatte.

[Flyer](#)

Bitte bestätigen Sie ihre Teilnahme bis zum 22. Mai 2009 per [Mail](#). Vielen Dank.

07.05.2009 16:02

Auszeichnung von «Schweizer Jugend forscht» für Fitore Sallahaj

«Schweizer Jugend forscht» hat Fitore Sallahaj mit dem Prädikat «Sehr gut» ausgezeichnet.



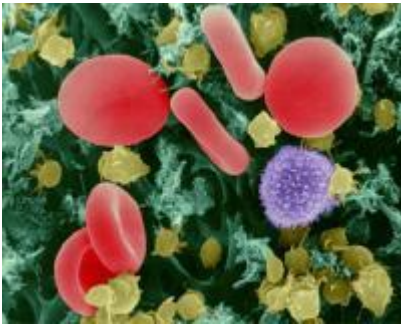
Die Gymnasiastin Fitore Sallahaj, die am ISPM Bern als Hilfsassistentin arbeitet, wurde für ihre Beobachtungsstudie zum Einfluss des Alltagsgeschehens auf Traumhalte von «Schweizer Jugend forscht» mit dem Prädikat «Sehr gut» und einem Preisgeld von CHF 1000.-- ausgezeichnet.

[Schweizer Jugend forscht](#)

01.05.2009 09:59

Do erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (ESA) increase mortality in patients with cancer?

An individual patient data meta-analysis based on randomized controlled trials in cancer patients allocated to erythropoiesis-stimulating agents or control showed an increased risk to die for patients randomized to receive erythropoiesis-stimulating agents. Uncertainty remains whether results apply to all patients or whether certain patient groups are not at increased risk (e.g. patients undergoing chemotherapy).



The study was conducted within an international collaboration including scientists from the ISPM. Data were provided from pharmaceutical companies and independent investigators. The study was funded by OncoSuisse and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and will be published in the Lancet:

Julia Bohlius, Kurt Schmidlin, Corinne Brilliant, Guido Schwarzer, Sven Trelle, Jerome Seidenfeld, Marcel Zwahlen, Michael Clarke, Olaf Weingart, Sabine Kluge, Margaret Piper, Dirk Rades, David P Steensma, Benjamin Djulbegovic, Martin F Fey, Isabelle Ray-Coquard, Mitchell Machtay, Volker Moebus, Gillian Thomas, Michael Untch, Martin Schumacher, Matthias Egger, Andreas Engert: Recombinant human erythropoiesis-stimulating agents and mortality in patients with cancer: a meta-analysis of randomised trials. Lancet, Vol 373, 2009, pages 1532-1542.

[The Lancet](#)

Photo credit: www.flickr.com

25.03.2009 09:19

Trial registration made easy

CTU Bern developed a program that facilitates registration of clinical trials on www.clinicaltrials.gov



Any clinical trial initiating patient enrolment after December 26, 2007 should be registered no later than 21 days after the first patient is enrolled. The preferred online registry, which currently meets all of the requirements of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, is the U.S. National Library of Medicine's www.clinicaltrials.gov

The registration of clinical trials on www.clinicaltrials.gov is a service provided by CTU Bern to institutions of Bern University Hospital and the University of Bern. To facilitate and shorten the registration procedure CTU Bern developed a registration program.

In order to facilitate and to shorten the registration procedure CTU Bern has developed a new registration program. >>

Files:

 [Manual_d_RegProgram_v1_01.pdf](#) 19.7 K

 [Manual_e_RegProgram_v1_01.pdf](#) 19.4 K

20.02.2009 10:45

Venia docendi for Dr. Christoph Stettler

The Faculty of Medicine approved Christoph Stettler's habilitation or 'venia docendi' (the right to teach).



The venia docendi or habilitation stands for the documented ability of a candidate to independently represent a discipline in research and teaching. In German-speaking Europe the successful candidate obtains the title of "Privatdozent" and can add the letters PD in front of his doctoral title.

Christoph Stettler is affiliated with the Inselspital's Department of Endocrinology, Diabetology and Clinical Nutrition and with ISPM Bern. His primary research focus is on epidemiological and metabolic aspects of cardiovascular disease in diabetes.

Congratulations, PD Dr Christoph Stettler!

04.02.2009 07:15

STREGA recommendations published

STREGA, the first extension of the STROBE Statement, has now been published by several journals simultaneously including Human Genetics, PLoS Medicine and Annals of Internal Medicine.



The acronym stands for "STrengthening the REporting of Genetic Association Studies". The reporting guideline aims to improve the accuracy and transparency of published genetic association studies by proposing extensions to 12 of the 22 original items of the STROBE checklist for cohort, case-control, and cross-sectional studies. Erik von Elm has contributed as a member of the STREGA writing group. The collaborative effort was launched in 2006 by the Human Genome Epidemiology Network (HuGENet™) and led by Julian Little (University of Ottawa / Canada). The new reporting guideline is freely available on the journals' websites.

Photo credit: www.flickr.com

Links to STREGA articles:

- [Human Genetics](#)
- [PLoS Medicine](#)
- [Annals of Internal Medicine](#)

23.01.2009 14:30

New professors in Bern and Basel

Martin Rösli and Marcel Zwahlen have been promoted to professorial positions funded by the Swiss School of Public Health (SSPH+).



Marcel Zwahlen, a senior epidemiologist who joined ISPM Bern in 2003, has a first degree in Physics from the University of Bern, Switzerland, and a PhD in Epidemiology from Johns Hopkins University, USA. His research is concerned with public health epidemiology, with a focus on methodological aspects of analysing surveillance and registry data, including the use probabilistic record linkage. He has been involved in analyses of longitudinal studies including the Swiss National Cohort (SNC), the Swiss HIV Cohort (SHCS) and the Swiss Childhood Cancer Registry (SCCR). More recently he has taken an active interest in systematic reviews and evidence synthesis, using Bayesian approaches in the evaluation of health care interventions. He is the author of close to 100 scientific articles, commentaries and editorials. In his new function he will contribute to public health research and teaching at University of Bern and the SSPH+. A similar position will be created at ISPM Bern for a medical sociologist or social epidemiologist later this year.

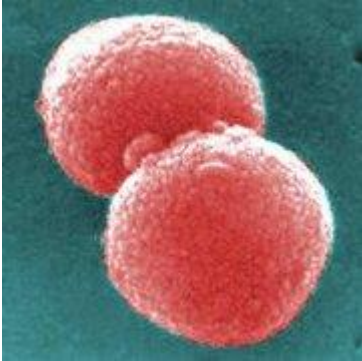
Martin Rösli has been elected to a newly created assistant professorship at the Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine (ISPM) of the University of Basel, also funded by the SSPH+. After six years at ISPM Bern, he will start his new position in Basel on 1 February, 2009. Martin Rösli has a background in atmospheric physics and a PhD in environmental epidemiology. His research deals with environmental health and includes exposure assessment studies, aetiological research, methodological research, and health risk assessments in the area of electromagnetic fields, passive smoking, noise exposure and ambient air pollution. He is a member in various national and international commissions on environmental health risk and has published numerous scientific papers, reviews and book chapters. In Basel he will continue to conduct environmental health research and contribute to the teaching at University level and within the framework of the SSPH+. His appointment will strengthen the collaborative links between the two institutes, particularly in the context of the Swiss National Cohort and the Swiss Childhood Cancer Registry.

Links:

- [Swiss National Cohort](#)
- [Swiss Childhood Cancer Registry](#)
- [Swiss HIV Cohort Study](#)

Is pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccination in adults effective?

The commonly used pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccines (PPV) do not appear to be effective for preventing pneumonia and policy makers may wish to reconsider their current recommendations for PPV, reports a study from ISPM and the University of Bristol, which was recently published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal.



The study, a systematic review and meta-analysis, looked at 22 clinical trials, and more than 100,000 participants from countries in North America, Europe, Africa and the Asia-Pacific region. Results of trials were heterogeneous, and the reasons for different clinical trials producing different results were examined in detail. It was found that the quality of the studies, especially double blinding, substantially affected the results. When only high quality, double-blinded trials were included, there was little evidence that PPV could prevent pneumonia (RR 1.20, 95% CI 0.75–1.92, for presumptive pneumonia; and 1.19, 95% CI 0.95–1.49, for all cause pneumonia). The study adds to the ongoing debate around effectiveness of the unconjugated polysaccharide vaccine. It is important to distinguish between this vaccine, which is used in adults, and the conjugate vaccine used in children. The efficacy of the childhood vaccine is well documented.

Photo: Pneumococcus. Photo credit: www.flickr.com

Link:

- [Canadian Medical Association Journal](#)