

ISPM News Archive 2006

14.12.2006 12:47

Venia docendi for ISPM's Dr. Nicola Low

The Faculty of medicine approved Nicola Low's habilitation or 'venia docendi' (the right to teach) on 13th December, 2006.



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 her doctoral title.

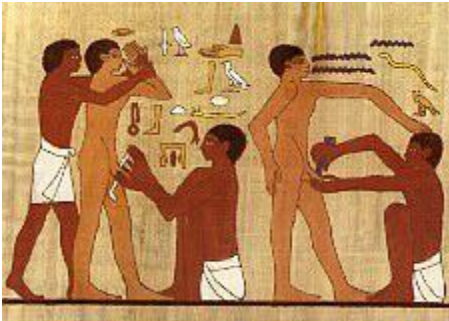
Nicola Low's area of research is sexual health, with a focus on the epidemiology and prevention of Chlamydia infections.

Congratulations, PD Dr. Nicola Low!

14.12.2006 12:20

Male circumcision prevents HIV infections

Two large randomised controlled trials of male circumcision and HIV infection in Uganda and Kenya have been stopped early, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced.



The National Institutes of Health halted the studies when it became overwhelmingly clear that circumcision significantly reduces men's chances of catching HIV. The studies enrolled adult men willing to be circumcised and randomly assigned them to immediate surgery or to a control group. In both studies, number of HIV infections in the circumcised men was half that of the uncircumcised men. The studies confirm the results of a trial that was stopped last year in South Africa, in which circumcision prevented 60 percent of new AIDS infections. This may be the most important development in AIDS research since the introduction of highly active antiretroviral combination therapy a decade ago.

Investigators at ISPM, in collaboration with South African Medical Research Council and UK investigators, will now update their earlier review of evidence from observational studies for the Cochrane Collaboration, which was published in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*. The United Nations AIDS program and the World Health Organization are already discussing how they might promote circumcision in countries around the world. Any campaign will have to be coupled with warnings that circumcision offers only partial protection against HIV and should not become a license for risky sex.

[NIH press release](#)

07.12.2006 10:45

Controversy over Global Control of STI

This week, The Lancet publishes an article by Nicola Low of the ISPM and an international team of colleagues.

THE LANCET

"A combined microfinance and training intervention can lead to reductions in levels of intimate-partner violence."



This article examines interventions to control sexually transmitted infections globally, and the lack of investment by some governments, due to moral objections.

Lancet editor, Richard Horton, drew attention to criticism by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which resulted in the removal of a co-author from the paper, saying, "This culture of political censorship and fear...diminishes intellectual, scientific, and public-health leadership."

[Article by Low et al](#)

[Editorial by Horton](#)

08.11.2006 14:02

Jürgen Barth joins ISPM

On first of October 2006 Jürgen Barth started as a senior researcher at ISPM, in the Social and Behavioural Health Research division.



His main research interests concern comorbidity of somatic and mental disorders, psychosocial aspects of chronic illness, and health psychology. In health psychology he served as an expert in the area of fear appeals and risk communication research in several panels. As a psychotherapist he is working with patients suffering from cancer, HIV, coronary heart disease and comorbid mental disorders.

In October 2006 the Habilitation of Jürgen Barth was approved by the faculty of Economics and Behavioural Sciences at the University of Freiburg (Germany). His thesis is entitled „Coronary Heart Disease: Psychosocial aspects in aetiology, prognosis and treatment“ and is based on several international publications on this topic.

03.11.2006 10:00

ISPM winner of SWISS BRIDGE Award 2006

A research group led by ISPM's Matthias Egger is one of three winners of the SWISS BRIDGE AWARD 2006.



His group received half of the 500,000 Swiss Francs awarded, for a research project on non-Hodgkin lymphoma and Hodgkin's disease in HIV-infected patients.

[SWISS BRIDGE](#) is a charitable foundation based in Switzerland, which supports cancer research in Switzerland and abroad.

18.10.2006 08:33

Volz award for best PhD Thesis 2005-06

Nicole Bender, specialist registrar at the ISPM, won the Volz award 2006 for her MD-PhD Thesis.

The Volz Award is given every two years for the best scientific work at the Zoological Institute, University of Bern.

Title of the thesis: "**The relationship between social status, behaviour, growth and steroids in male helpers and breeders of a cooperatively breeding cichlid**".

The award ceremony and a 20 min. talk will take place at the 21. November 2006 (16.15 Uhr), Haller-Auditorium, Baltzerstrasse 1, Bern.

[More Infos about the Volz Award ...](#)

13.10.2006 17:21

Award for best poster presentation

Martin Scherer, a former visiting research fellow at ISPM, and his colleagues Stephan Reichenbach, Sven Trelle and Peter Jüni won the award for the best poster presentation at the 40th Meeting of the German Society for General Practice and Family Medicine (DEGAM) in Potsdam, Germany, for a meta-analysis on chondroitin for the treatment of osteoarthritis. The meta-analysis found no robust evidence to support the use of chondroitin in osteoarthritis.

[Meeting's Website](#)

05.10.2006 22:11

ISPM to play important role in NIH-sponsored international health project

The International epidemiologic Databases to Evaluate AIDS (IeDEA) get started...



This large-scale initiative will establish international regional centers for the collection and harmonization of data and the establishment of an international research consortium to address unique and evolving research questions in HIV/AIDS currently unanswerable by single cohorts. ISPM Bern, in close collaboration with the University of Cape Town (Dr Andrew Boule), will be leading the consortium in Southern Africa (see map below for participating centers). Other regions with IeDEA consortia include East Africa, Central Africa, Asia and Australia, South America and North America.

- [IeDEA brochure](#)
- [IeDEA website](#)
- [NIAID request for application](#)

21.09.2006 12:36

Sponsoring in mobile phone health studies

A ISPM study reports influence of sponsors on mobile phone health studies ...

Source of funding can have an effect on results of mobile phone health studies. In a paper accepted for publication in Environmental Health Perspectives (EHP), Anke Huss, Martin Rösli and co-workers found that: "Studies exclusively funded by industry reported the largest number of outcomes but were least likely to report a statistically significant result ... compared to studies funded by public agencies or charities."

Their analysis is based on 59 experimental studies published between 1995 and 2005. Huss and Rösli advise that "the interpretation of the results from existing and future studies of the health effects of radiofrequency radiation should take sponsorship into account."

EHP is an open access journal and the full text of the paper is available now in preprint form.

- [Press release \(in German\)](#)
 - [Paper \(free access\)](#)
-

03.09.2006 21:58

Results from the Swiss Railway Cohort Study presented

The results were presented at the annual meeting of the International Society for Environmental Epidemiology.

The objective of the Swiss Railway Cohort Study was to investigate the relationship between extremely low frequency magnetic fields exposure and mortality from several neurodegenerative and carcinogen conditions in a cohort of Swiss railway employees.

We studied a cohort of 20'141 Swiss railway employees with 464'129 person-years of follow-up between 1972 and 2002.

We found some evidence for an association between magnetic field exposure and risk of Alzheimer's disease. However, compared to a previous study, we observed a lower leukaemia risk.

Additional Information

- [Press release BAG](#)
 - [Conference Homepage](#)
-

31.08.2006 18:22

Thomas Abel in September at the University of Gothenburg

Thomas Abel has been invited to present his new concept on cultural capital and health at the University of Gothenburg on September 14th 2006.

The following day he will discuss the policy implications of this new Public Health approach with Swedish policy makers.

16.08.2006 13:24

Major chlamydia study set to publish

The Chlamydia Screening Studies (ClaSS) project, has been highlighted as part of Sexual Health Week (7-13 August 2006) in the UK.

More than 4,500 individuals took part in the multi-centre series of studies, led by Dr Nicola Low and Prof. Matthias Egger. The prevalence of Chlamydia, the most effective procedures for notifying partners, the performance of different screening strategies and tests as well as the emotional, social and psychological effects of screening were examined. The ClaSS project was commissioned by the UK Health Technology Assessment programme. Chlamydia is the world's most commonly reported sexually transmitted infection. "We hope that the findings of these studies will help to inform the ongoing development of the National Chlamydia Screening Programme, which is in the process of establishing another 50 screening sites across the UK," says Dr Low. "Our research has identified some interventions that could be evaluated in a randomised trial to help determine the effectiveness of opportunistic screening." See [here](#) for the press release.

16.08.2006 11:25

ISPM wins European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control contract

Dr. Nicola Low will lead a research team from Switzerland (Bern / Lausanne), Denmark, The Netherlands, Sweden and the UK to conduct a Europe wide review of chlamydia control programmes.

For a previous summary of chlamydia screening activities in the European Union see [here](#). The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control is a new EU agency that has been created to help strengthen Europe's defences against infectious diseases, such as influenza, SARS and HIV/AIDS. For more information about ECDC see [here](#).

14.08.2006 13:57

ISPM staff members elected Fellows of the Faculty of Public Health

Leonie Prasad, Nicola Low and Matthias Egger have been elected Fellows of the Faculty of Public Health (FPH) ...

The FPH is the standard setting body for specialists in public health in the UK. The Faculty works to improve the public's health through education and the setting of standards, advocacy and contribution to policy. The FPH is a Faculty of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom and has a membership of 3000. The Faculty is a registered charity. See [here](#) for further details about the FPH.

02.08.2006 22:53

HIV/AIDS treatment remains successful 10 years on but rise in tuberculosis is cause for concern

A decade after the introduction of highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) in Europe and North America, the risk of AIDS and death remains low for those starting treatment ...

However, there has been a rise in tuberculosis among patients starting HAART in recent years. These are the results of the latest analysis from the ART Cohort Collaboration, a large collaborative study of HIV-infected patients treated in Europe and North America. Matthias Egger of ISPM is one of the principle investigators. The results are published in the Lancet on August 5. See [here](#) for the full report of the study.

13.07.2006 22:37

The scandalous failure of scientists ...

The talk Sir Iain Chalmers gave on "The scandalous failure of scientists to cumulate scientifically" on June 30 in Berne is available for download

[here](#) (PDF, 9 MB).

Das Seminarprogramm 2006/2007 ist online verfügbar.

Auch dieses Jahr konnten wir ein sehr interessantes Programm zusammenstellen - die Vorträge sind öffentlich und beginnen üblicherweise um 16:00 Uhr am ISPM (Finkenhübelweg 11 - Seminarraum 606 im 1. Stock).

Das detaillierte Programm sowie die PDF-Datei zum Downloaden finden Sie [hier](#).

08.06.2006 10:33

830 influenza-attributable deaths per year in Switzerland

A study estimated 24 800 influenza-attributable deaths in the years 1969 to 1999 in Switzerland ...

Researchers from the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine of the University of Berne together with scientists from the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health published in [Swiss Medical Weekly](#) (www.smw.ch) a study estimating the influenza-attributable mortality in Switzerland over the 30 year period 1969-1999. They estimated that 24 800 (95% confidence interval:21 000 to 28 600) persons died in the 30 years analysed, about 2 times the official count of influenza deaths. In the 1990es the yearly number of influenza-attributable deaths stabilized at about 600 to 700. The authors concluded that only counting official influenza deaths underestimated influenza-attributable mortality in Switzerland by a factor of two to three, and that elderly remain the primary target group for influenza vaccination.

[Link](#) to the paper (Original articles: Brinkhof MWG, Spoerri A, Birrer A, Hagman R, Koch D, Zwahlen M. Influenza-attributable mortality among the elderly in Switzerland).

07.06.2006 09:39

UMTS study published

A Swiss study consortium reports no detrimental effects of UMTS base station-like exposure on well being and cognitive function.

The researchers from the Institute for Pharmacology and Toxicology (University of Zurich), IT`IS Foundation (ETH Zürich) and the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine (University of Bern) could not confirm the results of a Dutch study that showed an impairment of well being due to radio frequency radiation in 2003. The Swiss study on the effects of UMTS exposure is published today in the scientific journal «Environmental Health Perspectives».

Links:

- [Press release](#) (in German)
- [Press release](#) (in English) und study summaries (German and English)
- [Paper](#) (open access)
- [Uniaktuell](#)

01.06.2006 08:44

Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences: New member

Matthias Egger elected to become a member of the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences ...

On May 23 the Senate of the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences elected **Matthias Egger**, the director of ISPM, to become a member of the Academy. The mission of the Academy is to clarify ethical questions, reflect on the future of medicine, and promote the coming generation of scientists in academic medicine, especially in clinical research ([see http://www.samw.ch](http://www.samw.ch))

01.06.2006 08:36

A Hero of the AIDS movement

Paula Braitstein was honoured as a "Hero of the AIDS movement" on May 7th by the British Columbia Persons with AIDS (BCPWA) Society

Paula Braitstein, Canadian epidemiologist at ISPM, was honoured as a 'hero of the AIDS movement' on May 7th by the British Columbia Persons with AIDS (BCPWA) Society in the category of 'Service Delivery' for her role as an HIV treatment educator and advocate. Specifically, Paula developed the Treatment Information Program into a nationally and internationally trusted source of treatment information for people living with HIV/AIDS.

05.04.2006 10:10

Educational inequalities in life expectancy

Swiss men at age 30 with university education live on average more than 7 years longer than their counterparts with only compulsory education. The difference at age 65 is still 3.5 years. In women this gap is not so pronounced. In Switzerland educational gradients in life expectancy are substantial, particularly among young and middle aged men. This study might contribute to the current discussion about flexible retirement age.

Swiss Medical Weekly: Educational inequalities

Spoerri A, Zwahlen M, Egger M, Gutzwiller F, Minder C, Bopp M. Educational inequalities in life expectancy in German speaking part of Switzerland 1990 - 1997: Swiss National Cohort. Swiss Medical Weekly 2006; 136:145-148.

Educational inequalities in life expectancy in German speaking part of Switzerland 1990 - 1997: Swiss National Cohort

Switzerland belongs to the group of nations with the highest life expectancy, but it is unclear to what extent life expectancy varies across socio-economic groups. We used data from a large longitudinal study to quantify differentials in life expectancy across educational groups for men and women of different ages. The Swiss National Cohort linked the records from the December 4, 1990 census with death certificate data up to 1997, using a probabilistic record linkage method. Life expectancy was calculated for four educational categories ('compulsory schooling or less', 'vocational training', 'upper secondary education', 'university

education') by constructing abridged life tables for men and women aged 30 years or older. At ages 30, 50, 65 and 80 men with university education lived 7.1, 5.4, 3.5 and 1.6 years longer than their counterparts with compulsory education or less. In women the corresponding differences were 3.6, 3.1, 2.7 and 2.2 years.

In Switzerland educational gradients in life expectancy are substantial, particularly among young and middle aged men. Social policies and public health strategies should address this situation.

Below the PDF-File of this article:

Angehängte Dokumente

- [Educational inequalities in life expectancy in German speaking part of Switzerland 1990 - 1997](#) (PDF 152 KB)

.03.2006 10:08

Free access key to success of AIDS treatment in developing countries

Mortality of HIV-1-infected patients during the first year of potent antiretroviral therapy: Comparative analysis of databases from low and high-income countries" by The Antiretroviral Therapy in Lower Income Countries (ART-LINC) Collaboration and ART Cohort Collaboration Study Groups

The Lancet, March 10, 2006

This landmark publication, led by investigators at the ISPM in Bern, shows that in spite of increased mortality rates particularly in the first months of treatment, Highly Active Antiretroviral Treatment (HAART) works in resource-constrained settings.

In spite of starting treatment in more advanced stages of disease, tuberculosis, lack of healthcare infrastructure, and the myriad of obstacles facing HIV-infected patients and their health care providers in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, within six months HAART reduces the probability of mortality to levels comparable to those found among HIV-positive patients starting HAART in Western Europe and North America.

Perhaps most importantly, the findings indicate the free provision of HAART is strongly associated with survival.

The authors conclude: "Antiretroviral therapy is feasible and effective in low income settings, but, compared with industrialized countries, mortality is high in the first months. Eligibility for antiretroviral treatment and the need for treatment of tuberculosis should be determined earlier, and HAART should be started before serious comorbidities develop.

More information: Dr. Paula Braitstein (pbraitstein@ispm.unibe.ch) or by telephone at +41 (0) 31 631 3555.

06.02.2006 15:24

First Annual Report of the Swiss Childhood Cancer Registry

The Swiss Childhood Cancer Registry is presenting the first Annual Report.

The Swiss Childhood Cancer Registry is presenting the first Annual Report describing Organisation, Routine analyses, National and international cooperation, Research projects, Activities 2004, Future activities, The new database concept, and Publications.

Further Information is available at the Homepage of the [Swiss Childhood Cancer Registry](#). The Annual Report can be downloaded [here](#).