

# 4th EPA Academia Summer School in Strasbourg

## From the stork's nest: Young psychiatrists spread their wings and fly

Rita Silva<sup>1</sup>, Emina Sabic<sup>2</sup>, Maria Antonietta Nettis<sup>3</sup>, Sofya Hmain<sup>4</sup>, Miranda Dalani<sup>5</sup>, Hale Yapıcı-Eser<sup>6</sup>,  
Dimitra Terzi<sup>7</sup>, Marisa Casanova Dias<sup>8</sup>, Tomasz Maciej Gondek<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Psychiatry and Mental Health Department of the Local Health Unit Of Guarda, Portugal

<sup>2</sup> Department of Psychiatry, University Clinical Center Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

<sup>3</sup> Department of Basic Medical Science, Neuroscience and Sense Organs, University of Bari, Bari, Italy

<sup>4</sup> Department of psychiatry, narcology and medical psychology, Kharkiv National Medical University

<sup>5</sup> "Mother Teresa" UHC of Tirana, Tirana, Albania

<sup>6</sup> Çankırı state hospital, Çankırı, Turkey

<sup>7</sup> 8th Department, Attica Psychiatric Hospital, Athens, Greece

<sup>8</sup> Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health Trust, London, UK

<sup>9</sup> Department of Psychiatry, Wrocław Medical University, Wrocław, Poland

### Corresponding author:

Tomasz Maciej Gondek

Department of Psychiatry, Wrocław Medical University, 10 Pasteur Street, 50-367 Wrocław, Poland

e-mail: gondektm@gmail.com

### The background

The European Psychiatric Association (EPA) is known for its permanent efforts to improve and enrich young psychiatrists' professional development. Since 2011 the EPA Committee on Education has been organising the Annual Summer School for young psychiatrists, up to two years after finishing speciality training. The 4th Edition of the EPA Summer School took place in Strasbourg from 29 May to 1 June 2014.

This year's theme was *Comorbidity between Mental and Physical Disorders*, one of the main challenges to psychiatry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Unfortunately, training on this topic is still one of the weaknesses of psychiatric education across Europe.

With the 2014 Summer School, EPA proved to be aware of the need to further develop training in this field, and young psychiatrists responded to the call with more than one hundred applications. The jury selected 26 scholars from 20 different countries, taking into account their curricula vitae, current employment and aims concerning future work.

The School was held in Strasbourg, a French city known for being the official seat of the European Parliament and also as home to the EPA Administrative Office. The scholars' accommodation was at the European Youth Centre which lodges the secretariat of the Directorate of Youth and Sport and is considered part of the protected architectural heritage of the world. For this reason, the atmosphere could not have been more European and multicultural, perfect to exchange information and experiences and a great interaction enabler.

The aim of this article is to provide a general overview of this remarkable learning experience - the 4<sup>th</sup> EPA

Summer School.

### **The opening day**

The opening ceremony was held for the first time at the EPA Administrative Office in Strasbourg and participants were welcomed by the President, Professor Danuta Wasserman and the Secretary General Dr. Julian Beezhold. We were introduced to the history of the EPA, as well as its future plans and activities and got a warm welcome from various faculty members, consisting of highly esteemed psychiatrists: Dr. Cécile Hanon, Prof. Norman Sartorius, Prof. Christoph Lauber, Prof. Albert Diefenbacher, Dr. Olivier Andlauer, and Dr. Henk Parmentier, who is a general practitioner (GP) involved in research within the field of mental health in primary care. After a short self-introduction participants continued socialising and got acquainted with each other over a cocktail. The first day ended with great expectations of the days ahead.

### **Day 2**

During the morning session of the second day, Prof. Sartorius provided us with a comprehensive outline of the course. He highlighted that comorbidity between mental and physical disorders is expected to become more frequent over the coming years. He pointed out the reasons of the prospective increase in comorbidity and its effects on medical practice. In this respect, one of the main obstacles to tackle is the increasing gap between different medical specialisations.

The relevance of this gap emerged again later, during the practical sessions on the topic *Cancer and Mental Health*. We joined a small group discussion of case studies with the faculty. Different groups had the opportunity to exchange views during the following plenary discussion. The interactions among participants were very enjoyable, and the discussions with faculty helpful for our professional activity. In particular, we found discussing ethical, legal, and communication issues to be fruitful, in addition to diagnostic and therapeutic strategies.

Prof. Lauber's talk on *How to write a scientific paper*, provided us with precious advice and instructions. He covered all sections of a scientific paper and analysed in detail each step of writing. Above all, he noted that the key to write effectively is to have a *clear research question*. It was very inspiring to see that many of us are involved in research activities. From this lecture we took valuable lessons that will help us to turn our research ideas into high quality papers in the future. In the evening, the scholars were invited to dinner at one of the restaurants in La Petite France, a historic district of Strasbourg.

### **Day 3**

The third day of the Summer School included two sessions. Dr. Andlauer gave the first talk on the topic *Towards a brighter future: the commitment of EPA for European early career psychiatrists*. He drew attention to the creation of the Early Career Psychiatrists Committee (ECPC), its structure and various interactions with other scientific psychiatric programmes. He presented the main ECPC task forces: meetings and associations, professional development, publications and research. The ECPC track at the EPA congress includes conversations, debates, symposia and other activities aimed at assisting in the training of young specialists in psychiatry. The ECPC also gives attendees the opportunity to participate in social activities, provides grants, prizes and reduced fees for young psychiatrists. Every year, the number of participants of the ECPC track at EPA increases.

The second talk was on the topic *How to make a presentation* by Prof. Sartorius, who presented in a very interesting manner, the rules for a successful presentation. Later in the day, scholars had the opportunity to join a round table discussion entitled *Body and mind*. We noted the importance of regular interaction between psychiatrists and GPs and their joint participation in the management of patients with comorbid disorders in order to reduce the risk of complications

and improve treatment efficacy. During the discussion, participants shared their experiences. Afterwards, we had two small group discussions, each of them followed by plenary discussions, where we discussed patients with comorbid disorders and their transfer from a somatic department to a psychiatric one, differential diagnosis and reasons for transfer.

The day ended with a lovely stroll by the river L'Ille. We also took a riverboat and we had the opportunity to see many sights of Strasbourg and to have dinner at a lovely restaurant, where we tried traditional Alsatian cuisine.

### **The final day**

On the final day, the key topics of the *In and out* round table discussion were: deinstitutionalisation, antipsychiatry movement in several European countries, the history and development of community psychiatry, assertive treatment of rehabilitation, empowerment and advocating.

From the discussion we learnt valuable lessons, applicable to everyday practice. Not only can we treat diseases but we may also have other roles such as mediator between patients and other health professionals; the role of an advocate; the source of everyday practical information for patients; and many others, as patients will need to *relearn how to live*, to regain old and gather new life skills, which is one of the biggest challenges for them.

Another critical topic facilitated by Prof. Sartorius was brought through role play of a "Fred Friendly" model. In this interactive narrated story, scholars played the roles of the members of a family affected by the impact of a mental health disorder on their lives. We explored their dilemmas, problems, medical and social consequences of this diagnosis on the person and on his entire social environment. As this model proved to be a very interesting teaching tool, many scholars shared their enthusiasm in bringing it back home and being creative while using it in different teaching environments.

The Summer School finished with the scholars providing feedback through a formal evaluation and they also received certificates. There was also an opportunity to take commemorative photographs with the faculty and other scholars, going along with an emotional farewell between all the participants.

### **Participants' feedback**

The experience of the EPA Academia Summer School started right after selected participants were announced. Far from being a four-day experience only, this was something that will long last for all who attended. From the first moment that the names were announced, it was clear that the Summer School would not only be a teaching medium but would be a way to learn, discuss, share and socialise!

Teaching materials were sent to all participants before the Summer School started, which made it easier to get familiar with the School's nature and content. Many scholars joined the opening ceremony where they met other participants in a friendly and relaxing environment. The lectures, case studies and workshops were well presented and led by very inspiring and knowledgeable lecturers. The opinion amongst scholars was that the lecturers were great role models who contributed to raise participants' awareness to work and study on the subject of *Comorbidity between mental and physical disorders*. In addition, the Summer School's programme was very successful in teaching about ways of acquiring the knowledge that is needed, how to work in small groups and to share the team spirit; and about observing and learning from the experienced lecturers.

To have scholars from a wide range of countries improved the Summer School experience. It was a great opportunity for most of the participants to meet colleagues from different countries and different cultures and learn about the health care system across Europe. The Summer School created a strong network among the participants who found a platform to collaborate on different issues and help each other to develop new skills.

Overall, the EPA Academia Summer School was a life experience in which we believe we have been very lucky to participate. We suggest our young colleagues not to miss this fantastic opportunity and apply to the next EPA Summer Schools.

### **Conclusions**

The 4<sup>th</sup> EPA Summer School held in Strasbourg from 29 May to 1 June 2014, dealt with the comorbidity between physical and mental disorders. Under experts' supervision and guidance, scholars were challenged with case studies, worked in small groups and discussed the therapeutic perspectives and interventions as well as ethical issues, thus being encouraged to take a holistic and multicultural approach of the patients. In addition to the educational component, the interaction among psychiatrists from different European countries was equally important not only in broadening scholars' social and psychiatric networks, but mainly in getting an idea of how psychiatry is practiced throughout Europe. In addition, the social component of the summer school, which was very well-organised, gave participants the opportunity to visit the city of Strasbourg, taste French food and spend time with friendly and available faculty lecturers, discussing and exchanging ideas, experiences and attitudes to psychiatry in general.

In summary, the 4<sup>th</sup> EPA Summer School was a really inspiring life experience that met our expectations at multiple levels. Our take home message is a holistic patients' approach. We were given the opportunity to spread our wings in a beautiful Alsatian nest and now we are determined to fly and spread this message.

### **Participants of the 4<sup>th</sup> EPA Academia Summer School:**

**Fargana Aliyeva**, Azerbaijan; **Nikitas Arnaoutoglou**, Greece; **Marisa Casanova Dias**, United Kingdom; **Miranda Dalani**, Albania; **Tomasz Gondek**, Poland; **Anna Grindvik**, Norway; **Sofya Hmain**, Ukraine; **Saana Karttunen**, Finland; **Dominika Karolina Korn**, Germany; **Antonios Liolios**, Switzerland; **Matis Martens**, Estonia; **Marcela Mezzatesta**, Spain; **Marina Mihaljevic**, Serbia; **Maria Antonietta Nettis**, Italy; **Emina Sabic**, Bosnia and Herzegovina; **Marko Saje**, Slovenia; **Nina Schweinfurth**, Germany; **Rita Silva**, Portugal; **Vera Teixeira de Sousa**, Portugal; **Dimitra Terzi**, Greece; **Andreea-Raluca Tirintica**, Romania; **Nefize Yalin**, United Kingdom; **Hale Yapıcı Eser**, Turkey; **Nihal Yurteri Cetin**, Turkey.

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