

# Newsletter ORAHS

November 2009



## Introduction

Dear colleagues/friends! Please find here the Autumn 2009 edition of our ORAHS Working Group Newsletter. With this newsletter we intend to give information on activities of the Working Group to its members and others who are interested in the Working Group.

If you have any relevant information, or if you are willing to write a short contribution for the next newsletter you can send it to Sally Brailsford ([s.c.brailsford@soton.ac.uk](mailto:s.c.brailsford@soton.ac.uk)).

In this issue we have a reflection by Erik Demeulemeester on the very successful 2009 meeting in Leuven, a preview by Angela Testi on the coming 2010 meeting in Genova, and a Phd student story by Ali Vahit Esensoy from University of Toronto.

## Agenda of coming meetings

February 18-20, 2010

IEEE Workshop on Health Care Management (WHCM 2010), Venice Italy  
Organizers Maria Pia Fanti, MengChu Zhou, Walter Ukovich  
[www.deei.units.it/WHCM2010/](http://www.deei.units.it/WHCM2010/)

March 29-31, 2010

IMA HEALTH 2010, London UK  
[www.ima.org.uk/Conferences/health2010](http://www.ima.org.uk/Conferences/health2010)

July 11-14, 2010

EURO XXIV Lisbon Portugal  
Health Care Management stream, organizers: Stefan Nickel, Marion Rauner, Teresa Melo  
[www.euro2010lisbon.org](http://www.euro2010lisbon.org)

July 18-23, 2010

ORAHS36 Genova Italy  
Organizer Angela Testi ([Testi@economia.unige.it](mailto:Testi@economia.unige.it))  
<http://orahs2010.diem.unige.it>

August 25-27, 2010

SCHEALS 2010 Turku, Finland  
Organizer Mikael Collan ([mcollan@abo.fi](mailto:mcollan@abo.fi))  
<http://iamsr.abo.fi/icaor2010>

**ORAHS 2009** (report by Erik Demeulemeester, [Erik.Demeulemeester@econ.kuleuven.be](mailto:Erik.Demeulemeester@econ.kuleuven.be))

**Memories of ORAHS 2009 in Leuven**

This summer, between July 12 and 17, exactly 149 participants gathered in Leuven (Belgium) for the 35<sup>th</sup> ORAHS meeting under the theme of "Rethinking health services management". Just before the welcome party on Sunday afternoon at the Domus, a typical Belgian pub, all clouds seemed to have moved out of Belgium and the weather remained splendid throughout the whole week (and even longer as I could tell you now with perfect hindsight).

Both scientifically and socially, we as organizers were very happy that everything ran smoothly during the meeting and that we hardly encountered any problems that we needed to take care off. Scientifically, Dr. Bruno Holthof, the CEO of the Hospital Network Antwerp and a former partner of McKinsey, set the stage with a very interesting speech on how this hospital network coped with their problems, while a visit to four hospital services in the University Hospital of Leuven further related theory to practice. The core of the meeting, however, were the 102 presentations, given by researchers from 23 countries all over the world. The general impression was that the quality of these presentations was pretty high, leading to lots of interactions during the sessions.



Socially, the welcome drink at the Domus and the guided tour of Leuven, topped off by a reception at the town hall (see the picture below for what you missed if you weren't there) made sure that old acquaintances were renewed and new contacts were easily made.

On Wednesday, all participants took the bus for a trip to Bruges, generally known as the Venice of the North. A guided tour of the city and a cruise on Bruges' canals showed some of the beauty of this medieval town (see pictures). On the other days, the partners of the participants were guided by Leen and Rita on trips to Ghent, Brussels and Antwerp to further taste from the beauty of Belgium.



On Thursday, a splendid organ concerto by Prof. Guido Dedene in the Beguinage church also showed that researchers from ORAHS could produce wind (see picture) and formed the perfect introduction to the conference dinner that was held in the Faculty Club.



As the organizers, we have very fond memories of ORAHS 2009 in Leuven and we really hope the same applies to all participants and partners. All pictures of the meeting can still be found on our website (<http://econ.kuleuven.be/ORAH2009/>) and we really hope to see you this summer in Genova (Italy).

**ORAHS 2010** (report by Angela Testi, [Testi@economia.unige.it](mailto:Testi@economia.unige.it))

The organizing committee for ORAHS2010 (Angela Testi, Roberto Aringhieri, Giuliana Carello, Franco Fragnelli, Enrico Ivaldi, Elena Tanfani) has worked very hard to prepare the meeting in Genova, next summer. The website for the meeting is open since 24<sup>th</sup> of November 2009. Below you find the first call for papers.



**XXXVI ORAHS Conference**  
**OR for**  
**patient-centered healthcare delivery**

ORAHS 2010 - Genova



Genova, Italy- University of Genova, School of Economics, 18-23 July 2010

<http://orahs2010.diem.unige.it>

**Aim of the conference.** The most difficult part of making decisions in the health care is linked to the high complexity of the system itself, to the intrinsic uncertainty involved and to its dynamic nature. This requires not only the ability to analyze and interpret a large amount of information but also to arrange that information for a cognitive base for adequate decision making.

Operational Research, like other methods of statistical and economic-related quantitative analysis, supplies these decision making tools and methodology. They are especially useful in the health care field where various actors (health care providers, administrative personnel, policy makers, companies, industries) should make coordinated, responsible decisions to ensure quality services to its citizens in a complex, decision-making environment that encompasses clinical needs, economic goals, ethical considerations, limited resource constraints, fast change and uncertain outcomes.

**Focus and topics.** The XXXVI ORAHS Conference suggests an innovative point of view in answering these questions. The focus of the Conference is: “Operational Research for Patient - Centered Healthcare Delivery”, an approach that requires complete re-organization of all steps in healthcare delivery. Much of the present operator and user dissatisfaction regarding healthcare services comes from the discrepancy in the people's needs and the system's answers. While the user has a broad formulated question, the answer of the system is fragmented. The following topics will be especially highlighted during the conference: the organization of therapeutic diagnostic protocols, chronic disease management, patient logistics, the evaluation of cost per pathology, healthcare and social service integration.

**Call for paper.** Participants are invited to submit a paper following the instruction reported in the website. A collection of expanded full papers will be selected for publication in a special issue.

**Venue.** The conference will be hosted in the School of Economy at the University of Genova, Genova, Italy.

**Important dates:**

- Abstract submission: April 15, 2010
- Notification of acceptance: April 30, 2010
- Early registration: May 15, 2010
- Full paper submission: June 15, 2010

**Information.** For any information please visit our web site: <http://orahs2010.diem.unige.it/>



***PhD researchers tell their story*** (report by Ali Vahit Esensoy, [ali.esensoy@utoronto.ca](mailto:ali.esensoy@utoronto.ca))

My name is Ali Vahit Esensoy and I am pursuing my PhD at the Centre for Research in Healthcare Engineering (CRHE) at the University of Toronto, Canada. I'm originally from Ankara, Turkey and came to the University of Toronto in 2001 to study Industrial Engineering. As I was finishing up my undergraduate degree and interviewing for jobs, I realized that most of the jobs out there involved using my hard earned engineering skills to contribute to our society through increasing the capacity of diaper factories, speeding up car

parts production or better, help produce mass quantities of petrochemicals. Around that time I met Mike Carter and got drawn to the curious world of healthcare operations research. I signed up for a Master's right after my graduation and liked the field and the unique challenges it brings so much that I decided to stick around and do my PhD.



At CRHE my research is focused on using operations research (OR) methods to help the development home and community care policies for seniors to address the challenges in the healthcare system due to the aging Canadian population. I am currently working with the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care to develop a system dynamics model of a health authority to project the potential effects of investments in the home and community care on the performance of acute care hospitals, especially regarding emergency department wait times and patient discharge delays. A related side project I am involved with involves the use of data mining techniques and geographical information systems to determine the distribution of gap in supply and demand for home and community care within the borders of the 14 health authorities of Ontario. My wish is to understand the best way to develop and

implement OR models so that they can become a part of the standard toolkit of policy-makers in healthcare.

I attended my first ORAHS conference in St. Etienne in 2007 and was struck with the strong sense of fellowship in the group. It was also very nice to attend a conference where the technical program was not a marathon of presentations but a platform for discussion and collaboration. The following year, it was our turn to host ORAHS outside of Europe, in Toronto. I had never been involved in organizing a conference, but knowing most of the conference attendees personally from St. Etienne made the task much easier. The ORAHS delegates were a pleasure to host and I think we showed everyone a good time. I believe that ORAHS' engaging but casual atmosphere was the perfect environment for OR practitioners from North America and Europe to meet and network. Knowing how much time and energy goes in to organizing an ORAHS meeting, I have to congratulate both the St. Etienne and Leuven teams for the brilliant job they have done. I am looking forward to yet another exciting ORAHS meeting in Italy this summer.

## **EURO- info**

EURO has an extensive website with information on EURO conferences and EURO Working Groups. The website contains also an annual report of ORAHS. The EURO vice-president 2 in charge of the Working Groups is Professor Marc Sevaux, University of South Brittany,

Lester France, who is *ex officio* a member of our working group. For more information about EURO, see [www.euro-online.org](http://www.euro-online.org)

### **Web-site news** (report by Sally Brailsford)

The ORAHS website can be found at <http://www.management.soton.ac.uk/orahs/>. It has been updated with a link to the 2009 conference. It contains two lists of members, the "link members" for each country and the "national members" from that country. This is still not the full membership list as it contains fewer names than the mailing list. We are planning to develop a system to allow people to add their names and amend their details online. In addition to this, we welcome ideas and suggestions for the website.

### **Short communications**

#### ***Post conference publications ORAHS2008*** (report by John Blake [john.blake@dal.ca](mailto:john.blake@dal.ca))

I can report that we have 13 accepted papers that are now all set and largely ready to go. I'll have a quick look through the formatting and hope to have this out to the printers before Christmas.

#### ***Proceedings ORAHS2006 Wroclaw*** (report by Marek Lubicz [marek.lubicz@pwr.wroc.pl](mailto:marek.lubicz@pwr.wroc.pl))

The book "Operational Research Applied to Health Services in Action" (which overlaps in 1/3 with the 2006 Proceedings) will be out of print hopefully next week (before Christmas). When it is ready it will be sent to the participants of 2006 meeting at Wrocław and to other authors (51 all together). I will also have some additional copies for other interested ORAHS members (if any) and potentially interested researchers and institutions in Poland (and possibly other CEE countries). I am not writing 'if any' for them, as I intentionally provide them with copies to have more people interested - there are already some key health people at our region awaiting the book). I hope to be able to send my Christmas greetings and New Year' wishes in a few days.

#### ***International Workshop on Scheduling in Healthcare Systems (SCHEALS'10)***

From 25-27 August an international workshop on scheduling in healthcare is held in Turku, Finland. Find below some information on the workshop, based on the call for papers.

**Abstract.** Many Healthcare providers have suffered a crisis of poor quality and inefficiency with rapidly increasing costs. Healthcare delivery faces complex scheduling needs and stands to gain from advances in scheduling technology and understanding. The SCHEALS 2010 workshop will take place at Åbo Akademi University in the city of Turku, in conjunction with the 2nd International Conference on Applied Operational Research (ICAOR'10). We invite you to join your colleagues for this international forum. Sharing of ideas, knowledge and experience is the primary goal of the workshop. The meeting would be ideal for young researchers to present their work, even at a preliminary stage, for constructive discussion and feedback.

**Workshop Theme.** The workshop will cover the general area of scheduling with particular emphasis being placed on healthcare applications, including, but not limited to: Automation, Exact Methods, Expert Systems, Heuristics, Machine Scheduling, Meta-Heuristics,

Optimization, Patient Scheduling, Personnel Scheduling, Queuing, Rescheduling, Shift Timetabling, Simulation, Uncertainty

**Important Dates.** Paper submission deadline 15th of March 2010. Registration deadline 15<sup>th</sup> of June 2010.

**Contact Details.** General information on the conference email to: [icaor2010@gmail.com](mailto:icaor2010@gmail.com)

*Discussion on format of ORAHS meetings (report by Penny Mullen, [p.m.mullen@bham.ac.uk](mailto:p.m.mullen@bham.ac.uk))*

In the closing ‘Group Affairs’ session at the end of the ORAHS meeting in Leuven, there was some discussion about possible changes to the format of future annual meetings. This was prompted, at least in part, by the desire to find ways to retain the original spirit and purpose of ORAHS with the large increase in the numbers of participants in the past three years.

A small virtual working group was established, convened by Sally Brailsford, and some ideas were exchanged. It was also proposed to compile and circulate a semi-structured questionnaire to seek wider views – that is still planned.

Among the issues raised during the session and in subsequent email exchange is one familiar to many OR conferences - the need to involve more practitioners. However, not many ideas for achieving this have been put forward so far!

It has been suggested that meetings would benefit from more controversy, perhaps with debates about key issues and ‘hot topics’. Having more papers and talks with a strategic focus has been proposed, along with a suggestion that there might be active solicitation of some papers, rather than relying solely on waiting for papers to be offered.

The increased number of participants has been accompanied by a large increase in the number of papers, necessitating multiple parallel streams – some longer-standing members will recall that parallel sessions were rarely needed in the past. In the face of this packed programme there have been calls for more time for discussion and interaction – accompanied, however, by a plea to avoid early-morning starts!

But where should time for discussion and interaction come from? Fewer formal sessions with fewer parallel streams has been proposed. A traditional feature of ORAHS meetings has been the ‘hospital visit’. Should these continue? If yes, in what form? Should they include meetings with senior managers and policy-makers? Would it be a good idea, where logistically possible, to revert to an earlier pattern of arranging the hospital visit as part of, or on the way to, the social outing? And/or should the social outing start later in the day, with the ‘scientific programme’ running up to, say, the coffee break?

Quite a lot of focus has been on how best to provide for the needs of the increasing numbers of PhD students within the spirit of an ORAHS meeting. There appears to be considerable agreement that research students benefit from being associated with the meeting. Ideas that have been forwarded include holding a pre-meeting symposium (say, Saturday & Sunday) for PhD students to present papers, with the additional proposal that the best three papers should be presented at the main meeting – possibly in a high-profile special session. It has been suggested that all – or possibly just early-stage – PhD students be encouraged to present posters. This could be accompanied by a special session giving each a 5-minute slot to introduce their poster. Complementary to the poster proposal is the suggestion that full

presentations be restricted to late-stage and completed PhDs. An alternative suggestion is that PhD students at any stage of their study who wish to make a full presentation should submit the complete paper in advance and a selection be made. A parallel stream for papers by PhD students has been suggested, but possibly the proposal for an evening session for such papers might not prove very popular with the presenters!

The discussion prompted a specific proposal for the Genova meeting (2010) for a special Chairmen's symposium (possibly half-day) on "Modelling Care of Older People – Issues and Approaches (Old and New)". It would appear that the 'Chairmen' in question are the three men before Jan Vissers (Duncan Boldy, Marten Lagergren, David Clayden) who have chaired ORAHS since its inception! If that idea takes off it could become a model for special symposia on different topics – application areas, policies, techniques etc – at each meeting.

It is still hoped to circulate a very slightly structured questionnaire around members of the group. But in the meantime, both me ([p.m.mullen@bham.ac.uk](mailto:p.m.mullen@bham.ac.uk)), Jan ([vissers@bmg.eur.nl](mailto:vissers@bmg.eur.nl)) and Sally ([s.c.brailsford@soton.ac.uk](mailto:s.c.brailsford@soton.ac.uk)) would be very pleased to receive any views or suggestions about the format of future meetings.