

# **Newsletter ORAHS**

November 2002



## **Introduction**

Dear colleagues/friends! Please find here the autumn 2002 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 want to write a short contribution for the next newsletter you can send it to Sally Brailsford ([scb@soton.ac.uk](mailto:scb@soton.ac.uk)).

## **Agenda of coming meetings**

July 6<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> 2003

EURO/INFORMS Istanbul, Turkey.

Information on health care cluster: Yasar Ozcan

Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond USA

tel: 1-804-828-5224 fax: 1-804-828-1894 or e-mail: [ozcan@vcu.edu](mailto:ozcan@vcu.edu)

July 28<sup>th</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup> August 2003

ORAHS29 Prague, Czech Republic.

Theme: Modeling Efficiency and Quality in Health Care.

Information: Martin Dlouhy, e-mail: [dlouhy@vse.cz](mailto:dlouhy@vse.cz)

<http://nb.vse.cz/csov/orahs/>

September 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> 2003

Fourth IMA Conference on Quantitative Modelling in the Management of Health Care  
Salford, U.K.

Information: Sally Brailsford, University of Southampton, tel: 00 44(0) 23 8059 3567  
fax: 00 44(0) 23 8059 3844 or e-mail: [scb@soton.ac.uk](mailto:scb@soton.ac.uk)

## **IFORS 2002: Edinburgh (report by Ruth Davies)**

A successful IFORS meeting was held in June 2002 in Edinburgh, Scotland. The Health Services stream was the largest stream in the conference with 41 papers. All the speakers arrived and presented and the stream was well attended throughout the week. The participants came from all over the world including Japan, India, Australia, Belgium, France, Austria, Italy, Canada, USA and, of course, the British Isles. We learnt about emergency rooms in Australia, ambulance services in Italy, dentistry in the USA, nurse allocation in Japan and social and hospital services in many different countries. There were papers on AIDS, on TB and on pattern matching to detect and diagnose diseases and much else besides.

Apart from an exciting scientific programme, some of us had an exhausting evening learning Scottish dances and many of us enjoyed tours of some of the local sights in Scotland in dry pleasant weather. The highlight of the week was the “Stream” dinner in the restaurant where Harry Potter was written. Good food and many bottles of wine were consumed. We are now looking forward to meeting again in Turkey in 2003.

*For more information, contact Ruth Davies, School of Management, University of Southampton, [rmd@soton.ac.uk](mailto:rmd@soton.ac.uk)*

## **ORAHS 2002: Rio de Janeiro (report by Mario Jorge Ferreira de Oliveira)**

The annual meeting of the Working Group was held July 28th-2nd August 2002 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The theme of the meeting was: Accessibility and Quality of Health Services. I think we had a very interesting and productive meeting of ORAHS in Rio. We had about 55 people interested in participating in the meeting. We had sessions on Quality Health Care, Emergency Services, Evaluation of Health Care, Scheduling Personnel, Location of Health Units, Performance Assessment, Decision Support Systems, Admission Systems, Information Systems and Performance Measurements. We had about 36 papers submitted and presented. The impact of the meeting was very good and I still hear favourable comments from the Brazilian colleagues and students. I hope we will have more some new people attending the future meetings.

I really enjoyed organising the meeting and think that it was a good opportunity to introduce the other members of the working group to some of the problems of the Brazilian Health Services.



The proceedings of the papers presented in Rio will be published. For more information, contact Mario Jorge Ferreira de Oliveira ([mario\\_jo@pep.ufrj.br](mailto:mario_jo@pep.ufrj.br)) or consult the website ([www.po.ufrj.br/~mario\\_jo/orahs2002/index.htm](http://www.po.ufrj.br/~mario_jo/orahs2002/index.htm)).

## **Workshop ‘National Health Care Systems’ Salvador** (*report by Valter de Senna*)

Valter de Senna and Sebastião Loureiro organized a workshop on ‘National Health Care Systems: exchange of international experiences’ in Salvador, Bahia, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 2002, just after the meeting of ORAHS in Rio de Janeiro. The target audience was local health care managers and representatives of health care authorities. About 80 participants attended the meeting. The objective of the workshop was to discuss recent developments in the Brazilian health care system, by comparison with relevant developments in other national health care systems. In particular, the following points were addressed by the speakers, regarding the working of the health care system in their respective countries:

- Who benefits and what are the benefits?
- Who pays and how much?
- Who collects the money and where does it go?
- How much is spent and on what?
- How do patients access services?
- What are the major challenges facing the health care system?

The workshop began with speeches from local authorities, including the Secretary of State for Health and the Chancellor of the Federal University of Bahia, among others. They were followed by Prof. Eduardo Motta, who set the present Brazilian scenario from the Federal Government perspective and Prof. J. Paim who presented a detailed description of how the system works at the local level.

We then had our President, Jan Vissers, with a most entertaining description of the Dutch health care system. He was followed by our Duncan Boldy, lively as usual, on the Australian experience. Vanda de Angelis, Harald Buhaug and Arjan Shahani gave us the Italian, Norwegian, British and Indian health care system comparisons. Arjan impressed us all with his passionate description of the scale of the problem in India, talking straight from his heart. The presentations were followed by a debate, where many questions were raised from the audience and the speakers had a chance to expand and clarify many issues on the way ahead for the Brazilian system as well as their national systems. The workshop ended with a cocktail party, loads of flowers and a night out.

For more information contact Valter de Senna ([vsenna@terra.com.br](mailto:vsenna@terra.com.br)).

## **ORAHS 2003 Meeting in Prague**

The ORAHS Working Group meets every year for one week in a different host country. In 2003, the 29<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Working Group will take place in Prague, Czech Republic, from July 28<sup>th</sup> to August 1<sup>st</sup>, at the Faculty of Informatics and Statistics, University of Economics Prague. Martin Dlouhy ([dlouhy@vse.cz](mailto:dlouhy@vse.cz)) is the main organiser of meeting. *“The theme of this meeting is ‘Modeling Efficiency and Quality in Health Care’. The registration will be open on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2003. Please, register early to help the organisers with their work. All researchers interested in the field of health care modeling are welcomed. Prague is a nice city to visit, with a wonderful Old Town, although it is, sometime, under the water. After the hard work during the meeting sessions, you will surely appreciate the good local beer in the evening”*. More information on this meeting can be found via the website: <http://nb.vse.cz/csov/orahs/>.

## **EURO- info**

EURO has an extensive website with information on EURO conferences and EURO Working Groups. The new EURO vice-president 2 in charge of the Working Groups is Professor Chris Potts, Faculty of Mathematical Studies, University of Southampton, who is not only *ex officio* a member of our working group, but has already attended one of our meetings (the 2001 meeting in Vienna) and is planning to come to Prague, since he is married to Sally Brailsford! For more information about EURO, see [www.euro-online.org](http://www.euro-online.org)

A new version of the website has become available since December 2001. Working Groups can now update their own information, and annual reports of Working Groups can be printed from the site directly.

## **Web-site news**

The ORAHS website contains information about many of the previous meetings of the group, going back as far as 1975 when the first ever meeting was held (in Exeter, UK under the chairmanship of Duncan Boldy). It has been updated this year with additional details about several previous meetings - thanks to everyone who sent us information. If you have any information about the remaining meetings, please contact Sally Brailsford (scb@soton.ac.uk). You can find the website at the following address: <http://www.soton.ac.uk/~orahsweb>. An option for downloading and printing a list of working group participants is currently under construction. However, anyone wishing to obtain such a list, or to email the entire working group, can do so by contacting Sally. We welcome ideas and suggestions for the website.

## **Short communications**

David Cromwell, a researcher at the University of Wollongong, Australia, has recently completed his doctoral thesis on "The use of information in the management of elective surgery waiting lists", and graduates in November 2002. The research examined two issues. The first concerned the use of a decision support system to assist the planning activities aimed at changing waiting list behaviour within an Australian context, and built on work undertaken in the UK. The second focussed on using waiting time statistics to inform patients about how long they might expect to wait. It addressed statistical issues raised by Government web-sites disseminating waiting time information to patients and GPs to assist their referral decisions. Those interested in further details of the thesis can contact David by writing to: David Cromwell, Centre for Health Service Development, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, NSW 2522, Australia, or by email at: [cromwell@uow.edu.au](mailto:cromwell@uow.edu.au).

Duncan Boldy, first chairman of the group, who emigrated to Australia in 1983 but who has still managed to attend a number of WG meetings since, has recently taken up a new appointment at Curtin University in Perth. In addition to his position as Professor of Health Policy & Management in the School of Public Health (now part-time), he is also part-time Professor in a newly created Centre for Research into Aged Care Services within the University. He says "*I'd like to come to Prague next year, but my new role means that it's easier to justify attendance at Gerontology meetings rather than OR meetings – we will see! catch you later*". Might this be a hint for future WG meetings? If you want to catch Duncan choose your theme well!

The Journal of the Operational Research Society is planning a special issue on 'Meeting Health Challenges with OR'. Developing countries are faced with difficult decisions concerning the considerable expense in treating AIDS and other infectious diseases whereas the major problems in developed countries concern coronary heart disease, cancers and the treatment and care of the elderly. Costs rise as investigations and treatments change with the evolution of technology and the development of new drugs, leading to better survival and greater demands for services. In the UK, general practitioners are in short supply, patients have long waiting times and operations, once scheduled, are often cancelled, patients wait on trolleys in A&E departments and hospital discharges are delayed because nursing homes are under pressure. The aim of this special issue is to demonstrate the impact that OR can make on these problems. The guest editors are Ruth Davies, Senior Lecturer from the School of Management at the University of Southampton and David Bensley, Operational Research Programme Manager at the Department of Health, Economics and Operational Research Division. They want papers from a spectrum of topics from international to UK based and from strategic policy issues to more tactical problems. They hope to include papers concerned with:

- appropriate OR methodologies for practical health challenges,
- modelling and analysis of policies for the provision of health care,
- case studies which show the added value of using analytical techniques.

The editors will be pleased to discuss proposed papers with authors in advance of formal submission. You may submit outline proposals to Ruth Davies or David Bensley (contact details below) by 31 March 2003. Please submit full papers to the JORS Editorial Office, Seymour House, 12 Edward Street, Birmingham B1 2RX, for peer review in the usual way by 31 August, 2003, marked as "Special Issue on 'Meeting Health Challenges with OR'".

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David Bensley, Operational Research Programme Manager, Economics and Operational Research Division, Department of Health, Quarry House, Leeds LS2 7QB, UK. Tel: 0113 254 5573, Fax 0113 254 5578, E-mail: David.Bensley@doh.gsi.gov.uk

Papers from the workshop 'Evidence based management in health care. The role of decision support systems' – organized as part of Interhealth 2000 in Sydney – are published as a book by ASHSA (Australian Studies in Health Services Administration). The book is edited by Duncan Boldy, Jeffrey Braithwaite and Ian Forbes (both from the University of New South Wales) – the organizers of the workshop. The workshop was attended by 25 participants, with managerial, medical or academic background. The announcement says: '*Evidence based medicine*' and '*evidence based health care*' have become buzzwords related to effectiveness in the provision of health care. These concepts – often used by health care managers and policy makers - need to be paralleled with the concept of evidence based management, so that measures considered by managers and policy makers can be checked in advance as to their effectiveness in terms of, amongst others, efficiency and the appropriate use of scarce resources. Decision support systems, usually computer-based, provide important evidence based tools for health care managers, increasingly involved in complex resource allocation decisions. The overall aim of this book is to introduce health care managers to the concept of decision support systems and illustrate successful applications in a number of areas. The authors represent a range of experts from a number of European countries and Australia, who have undertaken studies over many years and are particularly knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of decision support systems in the context of health care management. The book is aimed at managers working at all levels within the health care

*system and should also be of interest to clinicians concerned with the appropriate allocation of resources. There has never been a more important time for evidence based management to be practiced within health care.*

The book with contributions from Paul Forte/Steve Cropper, Duncan Boldy, Mårten Lagergren, Jan Vissers, Tom Bowen, Peter Rutherford, David Clayden, Jeffrey Braithwaite, Anna Whelan and Ian Forbes, can be ordered via Derek Huckel from ASHSA Books (d.huckel@unsw.edu.au).

Marion Rauner, University of Vienna, Austria, announces the forthcoming publication of the proceedings of the ORAHS 2001 meeting, published by Peter Lang. The book presents a selection of 18 of the 30 papers presented at the sessions and highlights the breadth of problems and quantitative approaches facing health care providers throughout Europe and beyond. The first paper of Jan Vissers entitled "The nature and content of health operational research" gives a good overview on the past and present research of this working group aimed at supporting health decision-makers to better plan for scarce resources by means of quantitative approaches. The book contains furthermore a survey study on prioritising, and sections on hospital services planning, hospital planning models, decision support systems, and prevention and health promotion. This illustrates the wide range of topics dealt with by operational research applied to health service. The reference details are: Rauner, M.S., Heidenberger, K. (edr.), 2003, Quantitative Approaches in Health Care Management: Proceedings of the 27th Meeting of the European Working Group on Operational Research Applied to Health Services (ORAHS), Vienna, Austria, July 30 – August 4, 2001, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, Germany. ISBN-Number : 3-631-39009-2 US-ISBN:0-8204-5470-2. The book will be sent out to the participants mid-December. For more information, contact Marion Rauner (marion.rauner@univie.ac.at).

Ruth Davies attended the INFORMS conference in San Jose November this year and found many interesting papers about health applications. Planning for AIDS, breast cancer screening and the allocation of renal and liver transplants were amongst the topics covered. Mike Carter invited her to the AGM of the Health Applications Sector where she received a warm welcome. The AGM was livened up by the provision of wine, cheese, biscuits and "door prizes", one of which was a bottle of pickles made by the husband of one of the members. Amongst the more serious business, the group expressed the intention of becoming a Society. This means that they will need to have their own journal and a meeting each year, independently of the main IFORS conference. Ruth understood that their journal would be Health Care Management Science (though clearly that is shared with others in Europe as well). They were keen to explore the idea of future joint meetings with us. Next year some members will be going to the Euro/Informs meeting in Istanbul and a few will come to Prague (Mike for one!). People who are members of INFORMS can become members of the Health Applications Sector by ticking a box and paying one extra dollar. As a first step, it was agreed that it would be a good idea to exchange Newsletters. Ruth welcomed cooperation between the two groups which will encourage the exchange of ideas and joint research.  
*(report by Ruth Davies)*