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S28. Research collaboration with developing countries

Chairs: L. Jacobsson (S), E. Hauff (N)

S28.1

Research collaboration in a post-disaster setting: experience from Nicaragua

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In October 1998 the hurricane Mitch struck Central America where Nicaragua together with Honduras were the worst afflicted areas. Around 200.000 of Nicaragua's 4.5 million inhabitants were afflicted by the hurricane, 10.000 people lost their homes and more than 2.000 were killed.

As part of ongoing research collaboration between the universities of Umeå, Sweden, and León, Nicaragua, the psychological consequences of the catastrophe were studied among primary health care patients. In the area where the present study was conducted more than 1.000 people were buried when an entire slope of the volcano El Casita crashed down on 14 villages.

In the presentation the interventional effects from the study are described and discussed with special reference to experiences gained from a collaborative perspective.

S28.2

Developing research competency – examples from Southeast Asia

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The best foundation for research collaboration with developing countries is a certain level of research competency and a culture of inquiry both in the North and in the South. The conditions for such a development vary greatly between countries like Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines. The following strategic components are emphasised: a consistent, long-term involvement with a secure funding, sufficient contextual competency among the partners, a systematic identification of relevant and feasible research issues, an integrated ongoing discussion on ethical issues, building research collaboration on educational collaboration, technical assistance in establishing and maintaining databases for mental health monitoring and research. These experiences indicate that the opportunities

for further collaboration between European and Southeast Asian countries in mental health research are good, also with a low-income country in an early phase of rehabilitation after massive destruction, like Cambodia.

S28.3

The Butajira Study – a comprehensive Ethiopian study on mental disorders

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Since the beginning of the 1990s a comprehensive study on mental disorders has been undertaken in the Butajira area 150 km south of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. In a first wave a study of mental distress using the self reporting questionnaire (SRQ) in a population of about 13 000 persons in 10 purposely selected villages was done. This study included also suicidal behaviour and use of chat and alcohol. In a next wave all psychotic individuals in an area covering more than 70 000 adults were identified through key informants and a screening procedure. A total of 850 persons with psychotic disorders has been investigated and will be followed for a number of years. The stigma mentally ill persons experience has been studied as well as the traditional healers in the area dealing with the mentally ill. The project is an example of research collaboration between researchers in a low in-come country and western industrialized countries. The possibilities and problems in such collaboration will be discussed.

S28.4

Title still to come

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No abstract was available at the time of printing.

S28.5

Ethics of research collaboration with developing countries

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There are many reasons for establishing research collaboration between low in-come countries and the more developed western countries. One is the obvious lack of financial and personal resources in developing countries, another the common interest of increasing our knowledge about the situation in all parts of the world and different kinds of societies. Finally the possibility of comparative studies involving contrasting cultural and bio-social milieus. Such collaboration projects are in many ways rewarding for all parties, but there are also a number of ethical issues, which must be considered, e.g. the risk of research imperialism, the procedure for ethical reviews and the issue of informed consent from illiterate people. Some principles for ethical transcultural research will be proposed based on respect for the individual person irrespective of socio-economic, religious and ethnic background.