

# Newsletter ORAHS

May 2010



## Introduction

Dear colleagues/friends! Please find here the Spring 2010 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).

In this issue we have news from the organizing committee of ORAHS 2010, who according to the photographs have everything under control. We have furthermore Ursula-Anna Schmidt from Saarland University in Saarbrücken Germany who continues the Phd student story, and some news on the recovery process of Ruth Davies.

## Agenda of coming meetings

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)

<http://iamsr.abo.fi/icaor2010>

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

Time is elapsing very fast and only three months are lacking to our meeting in Genova. Of course we are very occupied while working hard to prepare it, as you can see from the picture.



Important dates and call for papers are, as all of you know, already defined. We have developed a rich menu of publishing possibilities. Besides the abstract book, all participants, who already submitted an abstract, can also submit an extended abstract (maximum 14 pages), which will appear in the Conference Proceedings book (with ISBN) edited by Franco Angeli Edition and distributed during the conference. The extended abstracts must be submitted before the 1st of June, that is the ultimate and strict deadline fixed by the publishing Company to have the book prompt before the beginning of the Conference.

There are also two other possibilities. First, after the conference, authors have the opportunity to submit a full paper for publication in a special volume edited by Springer. Approximate Deadline: October 2010. Secondly, all participants could also consider to submit a full paper for publication in a special issue of "Computers & Operations Research" devoted to "OR for health care delivery". These papers will go through a normal reviewing process. Submission Deadline: December 2010. Decision of acceptance and approximate publication June 2011.

Other details can be found on the website where there is a presentation of the city and of the venue of the Conference and also a link with a webcam to get live sights of the city and of the ancient port where the School of Economics (*Facoltà di Economia*) is situated.

The preliminary "program at glance" is also scheduled. As it was requested, meetings begin at 9. There will be, probably, parallel sessions depending on how many abstracts will be sent. Besides, each day a "together activity" is planned because in our opinion it is very important to maintain the idea of the research family group that characterizes ORAHS meeting.

There are two plenary sessions (Monday and Thursday), where we have invited some speakers to debate key issues and hot topics. On Wednesday, we have welcomed with great pleasure the proposal of a Symposium about 'Modelling the care of older people' proposed by Duncan Boldy together with Marten Lagergren and David Clayden (past presidents of ORAHS) together with Paul Forte/Tom Bowen, to address another requirement of an ORAHS meeting, i.e. to focus on current strategic problems in healthcare. Note also that this Symposium is of particular interest in Genova, that is located in Liguria, the oldest region in Italy, which is one of the oldest countries in the world.

The third joint activity is the hospital tour, a traditional feature of ORAHS meetings, even if there is some debate whether to maintain such visit. Our choice was to maintain it though trying to include such visit into the scientific program. So we gave a title also to the visit, taking after the theme of the Symposium. Thus the visit should be a sort of scientific outing, i.e. a particular session which will be kept during the visit together with managers and doctors. We will visit one of the more important Children Hospital and Research Institute in Italy: Istituto Giannina Gaslini, where patient –centered health care is particularly required to take care appropriately of the young guests and their families and connecting hospital with home care along clinical pathways lasting, sometimes, different years.

Following ORAHS tradition also social events (pink-coloured areas in the programme) shared with accompanying persons are given a particular importance. The welcome party is planned to introduce you our city from a particular point of view, the sea. From 17.30 PM we are ready to receive you for registration in the ancient port near the Aquarium on board of a little boat, where we'll have some drinks and appetizers. At 18.30 PM the boat will start for a short tour inside the port (about an hour), so you can see Genova from the sea as the ancient travelers did.

On Monday at the same time, we will meet the medieval old town entering the little alleys labyrinth ("caruggi" in local dialect), to see *Palazzo san Giorgio* (the financial center in 1100 and 1200), *Cattedrale San Lorenzo*, the church center and through *Via Garibaldi* (ancient *Strada Nuova*), catching sight of the city's noble past in its 16th century palaces (*Palazzi dei Rolli*), to arrive at *Palazzo Tursi*, the Town Hall for the Major greetings and welcome cocktail.

On Wednesday the traditional trip will be to San Fruttuoso and Portofino by boat. Other visits are planned for accompanying persons to visit Museums, churches and also particular shops (spices, chocolate and so on).

Don't hesitate to contact us for every further requirement. We are waving from the Facoltà di Economia, waiting for you soon. Remember the early deadline registration of 15<sup>th</sup> May!

**FACOLTA' DI ECONOMIA**



**PhD researchers tell their story** (report by Ursula-Anna Schmidt, ([ua.schmidt@orl.uni-saarland.de](mailto:ua.schmidt@orl.uni-saarland.de))



My name is Ursula-Anna Schmidt and I am a PhD student at the Saarland University in Saarbrücken (Germany) where I studied business economics. After completing my diploma thesis, which addressed the topic of Genetic Algorithms in scheduling, I worked two years as a scientific officer for a chair of the economics department, where in the end unfortunately no topic was provided that was entirely congruent with my research preferences. Following this, Stefan Nickel offered me the opportunity to start a PhD

program in the field of health care management at the Chair of Operations Research and Logistics (Saarland University). The focus of my doctoral thesis, which I will conclude within the next few months, is analysing and improving patient flows and processes in hospitals by means of operational research techniques, with an emphasis on discrete event simulation. The cooperation with a German university hospital enabled me to get detailed and important insights into clinical workflows and to validate my models and solution approaches.

One aspect of my PhD studies that I find particularly interesting is the opportunity of taking part in applied research projects with different clinics. Besides studying the processes of the MRI department of the aforementioned university hospital for my thesis, I was involved in a project from the Fraunhofer ITWM in Kaiserslautern (Germany), analysing patient flows and processes in a CT and X-Ray department of a multispecialty clinic. The cooperation with different hospitals and the observations made confirmed what is known from literature: that each hospital has its own workflow, and solutions that work in one hospital are usually not templates, that can be transferred to other clinics. Each hospital requires an individual solution approach. That's what makes the field of health care management so very interesting and challenging to me.

The region around Saarbrücken, the Saarland, is a nice place to live, as the border to France is very close, and leaves a French mark and influence on the life and people living there. My favourite jogging track is in the forest of Spicheran (France), directly behind the border. When running along this path I can best loose myself in thoughts, and both relax as well as generate useful ideas for my work. This place is rich in history, as, during the Franco-Prussian War (19 July 1870 – 10 May 1871), Spicheran was the stage of the Battle of Forbach, also known as the Battle of Spicheran, with more than 1000 dead soldiers (6 August 1870). Also during World War II, the heights of Spicheran played an important role for the German defence: due to the withdrawal of the French troops to the Maginot line, German troops built up fortified positions there, on French territory. When walking or jogging through the forest of Spicheran, one can still discover the shuddering multitude of German bunkers that have not been planed for memorial reasons.

I enjoy spending my leisure time with a good book, travelling, photography, Latin-American dance or sports. One of my major affinities is languages: Besides my business studies I have learned Spanish and have improved my skills from previous schooling in French and English. Currently I'm focused on learning Russian, a language as wonderful as it is difficult.

The first time I took part in the ORAHS conference was in Saint Étienne in 2007. It was the first time I could present my work in front of an international audience and it was generally my first international conference. I was very positively surprised how easy it was to get in contact with the delegates and to get so much insightful and interested feedback on my work. I could establish many valuable contacts and friendships, which was reinforced and expanded at the ORAHS 2008 in Toronto. As a researcher in this field it is very important to get insight into the current research in health care management, and the ORAHS conference is the perfect platform to gain a detailed perspective on current research, not only in Europe. All participants of the next ORAHS meeting in Genova can look forward to another excellent conference and framework program.

## **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 ORAHS2009* (report by Erik Demeulemeester [Erik.Demeulemeester@econ.kuleuven.be](mailto:Erik.Demeulemeester@econ.kuleuven.be))**

Erik reports that the first review round for the special issue number of ORAHS 2009 is just finished and referee reports are sent to the authors. Out of 13 papers submitted, 10 will continue for the second round – 4 with minor revisions and 6 with major revisions. The papers will be published in the International Journal of Health Management and Information, due for December 2010.

### ***Post conference publications of ORAHS2006* (report from Marek Lubicz [marek.lubicz@pwr.wroc.pl](mailto:marek.lubicz@pwr.wroc.pl))**

We congratulate Marek with the publication of this book, which is partly based on the papers presented at the 2006 meeting of ORAHS in Wroclaw. Marek has taken this opportunity to compare development of applied OR, especially in the Polish health care, over the years between the first ORAHS meeting in Wroclaw in 1990 and this second meeting in 2006. By asking many ORAHS members to formulate viewpoints on challenges for OR contributions in healthcare, the book brings together much expertise in applied Health OR. Well done!

The book “Operational Research Applied To Health Services In Action – Revisited” was published in December 2009 by Wrocław University of Technology Press (Oficyna Wydawnicza Politechniki Wrocławskiej) with ISBN 978-83-7493-409-1.

The book consists of 35 chapters written by 51 authors from 11 countries, mostly by the members of the EURO Working Group Operational Research Applied to Health Services (ORAHS), within EURO - Association of European Operational Research Societies.

The aim of this book is to provide the target audience (researchers, health care managers, administrators as well as clinicians, particularly in Poland as well as other Central and Eastern European countries) with current developments in quantitative support for modern health systems. It also contains viewpoints of prominent international and Polish scholars and health care practitioners on the importance and determinants of successful applications of classical and modern quantitative approaches for solving health care problems.

The problem domain ‘Health Operational Research’ is understood throughout the book in a classic way as systematic, quantitative analysis in support of rational policy and decision making. This umbrella concept of operational research covers many classical approaches and methods, such as simulation modelling, mathematical programming, decision analysis, cost effectiveness analysis, development of indicators, and methods for forecasting, monitoring and evaluation. The list of modern quantitative approaches includes intelligent decision support and expert systems, neural networks, data mining or uncertain modelling. OR has always been an applied scientific discipline, dealing with real life systems, processes and complex decision problems. Health care and the boundaries of clinical and managerial decision making, have for many years been one of the most important application domains for OR.

Two thirds of all chapters have been written exclusively for this book; the other third is based on the presentations given during two ORAHS Annual Conferences, held in Poland in 1990 and 2006. The chapters are grouped into six parts:

Part 1, dealing with fundamental problems of Health OR as seen by two key national level specialists from Poland and the United Kingdom, as well as academics

Parts 2-4, presenting quantitative approaches applied to mental health care (Part 2), emergency health care (Part 3) and a selection of managerial and clinical problems in other areas of health care (Part 4)

Parts 5-6, containing viewpoints on the importance and determinants of successful applications of classical and modern quantitative approaches for solving health care problems, written by international (Part 5) and Polish (Part 6) scholars and health care practitioners.

### ***Modelling the Care of Older People – ‘Chairmen’s Symposium’ during ORAHS2010 (report by Duncan Boldy [D.Boldy@curtin.edu.au](mailto:D.Boldy@curtin.edu.au))***

Over the years since its inception in 1975, the working group has had a number of presentations related to the care and treatment of older people; indeed it has been (and remains) a favourite topic of many members, including the first two chairmen. Given the ageing of populations worldwide, and this year’s theme of ‘OR for patient-centred healthcare delivery’, it seems an appropriate time to revisit and update our knowledge of the particular issues related to the care of older people and OR approaches related to addressing these.

Chaired by the working group’s first chairman (Duncan Boldy, now living in Australia), the symposium will include presentations by Duncan, Marten Lagergren (second chairman) and

long standing members Paul Forte and Tom Bowen. Up to two complementary papers selected from those submitted will also be included and discussion will be led by David Clayden (third and immediate past chairman).

**Ruth Davies** (*Report by Sally Brailsford S.C. [Brailsford@soton.ac.uk](mailto:Brailsford@soton.ac.uk)*)



Ruth is Professor of Operational Research at the University of Warwick and is one of the UK's leading researchers in health OR. As Ruth's many friends in the OR world will know, she suffered a major brain haemorrhage in August 2009 and has been in hospital since then, making steady but slow progress. For the past five months she has been in Donald Wilson House, a specialist brain injury rehabilitation unit in Chichester, and she is now well enough to come home, though the final outcome remains uncertain and will not be known for many months.

On behalf of all ORAHS members, we wish Ruth all the very best and look forward to seeing her back at an ORAHS meeting – if not in 2010, then definitely in 2011.