



Third PMC/ProMAC meeting of the MedCHAMPS project, 17th -19th April 2011

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During the first two days the researchers for the work packages summarized and presented their findings of WP4, WP5 and reviewing the progress to date of WP6 in the four partner Mediterranean countries.

The revision included challenges and limitations for the implementation of the cross-cutting salt reduction intervention.

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The next annual meeting will be held in January 2012.

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NIVEEN ABU RMEILEH



PhD
Statistical Epidemiology

Dr. Abu Rmeileh received her PhD in Statistical Epidemiology from Glasgow University in 2004. Her research interest is focused on epidemiology of chronic diseases and reproductive health. She participated in the production of the Lancet Palestinian Health Series, especially focusing on articles related to chronic diseases. She was the Principal Investigator of the research project 'Improving the Quality of Mortality Data of the Palestinian Ministry of Health', which was commissioned by Oslo University Medical School. She also participated in completing several studies on reproductive health in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. She was a co-leader of the first randomized clinical trial in the country which sought to provide the evidence supporting the continued use of amniotomies during childbirth. She is a member of several national level committees seeking to reform and rationalize the Palestinian health care system, including the "Health Information System Thematic Group", the "Cancer Control National Committee", and the "National Population Forum". Dr. Abu-Rmeileh has taught Health Statistics, Environmental Statistics, Applied Statistics and Population and Development studies and has also conducted training courses for health professionals and mid-level technocrats in various topics including research methods, statistical and demographic methods.



THIRD PMC/PROMAC MEETING OF THE MEDCHAMPS PROJECT- FULL REPORT

The third annual PMC/ProMAC meeting of the MedCHAMPS project was held in Izmir during 17th-19th April 2011. All of the partners were well represented. During the first two days the researchers for the work packages summarised and presented their findings of WP4 (Data entry and model analysis), and WP5 (Situation analyses of current policy and health system contexts) and reviewing the progress to date of WP6 (Developing and evaluating policy options) in each of the four Mediterranean countries, including the challenges and limitations for the implementation of the cross-cutting salt reduction intervention.



The final day included the Project Monitoring and Advisory Committee (ProMAC) members who were able to attend. Presentations during the final day included updates of the progress of WP2 (Data collecting model), WP7 (Integration), WP8 (Dissemination and implementation of policy options) and WP9 (Training).

The business and general management issues were covered by Prof. Julia Critchley and Mrs. Pat Barker who also demonstrated the MedCHAMPS web site, <http://research.ncl.ac.uk/medchamps/index.html> and the new page listing MedCHAMPS' presentations and publications, as well as how to access the Dropbox section. All were pleased to confirm that the WP5 final report was delivered on time and has been accepted by the EU, and a summary of presentations and publications is in final preparation for deliverable D8.3. Having listened to the work packages update presentations, the ProMAC members agreed to the suggested policy priorities and the interventions: Health Services and Information (e.g. data, referral, inequities), and Risk Factors (e.g. salt, smoking, food labelling). The Committee also agreed that the work packages are proceeding in a timely manner, and confirmed that they will be able to assist with the promotion of interventions, assist in evaluation and provide administrative support from their Ministries of Health.

At the end of the meeting Prof. Critchley concluded by saying that progress since the project inception had been "better than she could have dreamed". In summary: WP4 is ready for "what if" scenarios; WP5 is completed and has highlighted issues such as inequities; integration is meant to develop frameworks to integrate and add value to data by joining up the results; economic evaluation has resource/time limitations and we should consider whether we can cost any further policy options using the collected data. Partners were asked to update the publications attributable to the MedCHAMPS project, and to start to complete quarterly financial reports and interim reports and return them to the Newcastle Administrator. All agreed that the next annual PMC/ProMAC meeting will take place in London from 23rd-24th January 2012.

HATICE ŞİMŞEK



MD, MSC, PHD
Public Health

Dr. Şimşek graduated from Akdeniz University Faculty of Medicine in 1999, and now works as a Lecturer at the Dokuz Eylul University at Department of Public Health since February 2011. Dr. Şimşek obtained her M.Sc and PhD in Public Health from the same department. She works as a researcher in WP4, WP6 in the MedCHAMPS project and is interested in health inequalities and social determinants of health.



MEDCHAMPS PROGRESS REPORT FOR DOKUZ EYLUL UNIVERSITY, TURKEY

A new report issued by the Turkish team mentions the progress of MedCHAMPS (from the Turkish side) in the period (April-November 2011). The following summary highlights the most important activities and some of the outcomes obtained from the different work packages.

WP2-3-4 related activities

- There was a little change in total cholesterol levels in Turkey since 1995 and the DPPs related to risk factor change were much smaller than the effect of statin treatment. When the effect of treatments was subtracted from the contribution of small change in cholesterol deaths, the model ended up with results that are hard to interpret. After discussing with S Capewell, M O'Flaherty and K Bennett, the Turkish team assumed that only the statins used for primary prevention had an impact on the change in cholesterol trend.
- Diabetes Model finalized. Using DISMOD program incidences, case fatality rates and mortality rates were generated to see how the model reacted with different inputs under different assumptions.
- Ege Stroke Registry follow-up study was completed.
- A short visit to Dublin and Liverpool was organised for K Sozmen to discuss the models with K Bennett, S Capewell and M O'Flaherty.
- Draft manuscripts for CHD IMPACT and Diabetes Models were prepared.

WP5 related activities

It was decided that each country team will prepare two papers; one on Policy Analysis and the other one on Medical Anthropology.

- The central team prepared the framework for the two papers.
- Writers of each paper:
 - Policy Analysis paper: B Kılıç, S Kalaça, B Ünal, P Phillimore, S Zaman
 - Medical Anthropology paper: S Kalaça, B Kılıç, B Ünal, S Zaman, P Phillimore

WP6 related activities

- All relevant documents and literature on salt intake were reviewed
- 8 interviews were realised with 3 experts from MoH, 2 academicians and 3 key informants.
- All the data including cost of policy making was completed by the end of July.
- Costing sheets for cost of illness data was completed by using data from the model, WHO-CHOICE, drug price lists from the Ministry of Health of Turkey, and data needed for indirect costs was gathered from the Turkish Statistical Institute.
- All the costs were calculated in local currency units (Turkish Lira) and converted to USD (August 2011).
 - Total annual cost of information campaigns was 5 million USD (PPP).
 - Total annual cost of reformulation was 198 million USD (PPP).
 - Total annual cost of labelling was 120 million USD (PPP).

WP8 related activities

There were many activities in dissemination; newsletter interview, presentations and papers submitted to national journals.

RADWAN AL ALI



MD
Clinical epidemiology

Dr. Radwan Al Ali graduated from Faculty of Medicine, Aleppo University, Syria. He has been working as a researcher with a special focus on clinical epidemiology related to CVD and diabetes at the Syrian Center for Tobacco Studies for more than 5 years. He is involved in planning, leading and conducting surveys on non-communicable diseases as well as cigarette and waterpipe smoking cessation intervention programs. Dr. Al Ali worked as a researcher on WP6 in addition to WP2 and WP4 in the MedCHAMPS project.



MEDCHAMPS PROGRESS, SYRIA

As the MedCHAMPS project moves toward its third year, all partners have made significant progress in different work packages.

The following brief will shed light on some of the activities by the Syrian team in Work Packages 4, 5 and 6.

WP4 Progress

- The cardiovascular model had been developed and the results have been formulated.
- A paper from this model 'Explaining the increase in Coronary Heart Disease mortality in Syria between 1996-2006' will be submitted in the near future.
- A diabetes model had been developed and the results will be published later.

WP5 progress

There are two qualitative publications derived directly from the Syrian part of WP5 final report's outcomes:

- The first Health Policy Analysis paper is trying to understand the health policy environment in Syria, in order to identify the adverse and unintended consequences of policy decision making, as well as the obstacles that affect policy implementation, and so undermine national and global goals for improved NCDs health conditions. Moreover, it declared that the role of good policy analysis often yields better policies.
- The second paper which is a Medical Anthropology one will investigate the perceptions of patients and health providers about the etiology of CVDs and DM diseases, and the barriers of effective management in Syria.

WP6 Progress

- A questionnaire was conducted to assess the costs of developing a policy to reduce the excessive use of salt (sodium) in processed foods in Syria, monitoring its implementation and promotion of health benefits resulting from this policy.
- Another questionnaire was conducted to estimate the costs incurred by the productive sector by application this policy. This questionnaire included four sectors of the food: meat, dairy, canned food, appetizers, which constitute about 70% of the volume of processing foods containing salt in Syria. Data was collected and sent to the Palestinian team responsible for the study of the costs of reducing salt in the project. The technical report on the assessment of the costs of reducing salt in Syria has been prepared and submitted.
- The third questionnaire was conducted to collect information from some decision-makers on a range of health policies. The latter were developed in order to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease in the community. These included four levels of information: the whole community, the most vulnerable groups, therapeutic interventions and the health system.



MEDCHAMPS: WP9-TRAINING OF JUNIOR RESEARCHERS

The main aim of WP9 is to develop research capacity in relevant areas by introducing new research methods and skills to all junior researchers in the consortium; in addition to provide junior researchers, particularly young scientists and social scientists, with opportunities to develop capacity for international and multi-cultural research by participating in data collection, model development, and implementation of field work in the four study countries.

WP5 Training:

- **3rd - 11th Oct 2009 Aleppo, Syria:** The first Training Workshop on Qualitative and Ethnographic Research Methods for Work Package 5 taught by Peter Phillimore and Shahaduz Zaman. Staff from the Syrian, Turkish and Tunisian Partners attended the workshop.
- **30th Nov – 4th Dec 2009 Newcastle, UK:** Researchers from Palestine came to Newcastle University to complete the WP5 training workshop.
- **14th - 17th Sept 2010 Istanbul, Turkey:** A qualitative data analysis workshop. The main aim of the workshop was to train the participants in the purpose and scope of qualitative analysis, to gain practice in doing analysis and reflecting/justifying choices, to identify the initial patterns of the findings and make a preliminary comparison and to discuss the data integration and policy implications. In addition it was aimed to update each other on WP5 progress in each country and to get feedback from the teams on the experience of WP5 data collection.
- **11th Oct – 7th Nov 2010 Newcastle, UK:** The key researchers for Work Package 5 from Syria and Tunisia came to Newcastle to analyse and start writing up their first draft of the situation analysis report.

WP2/4 Training:

- **Jan 2010 Izmir, Turkey:** Overview of CVD and diabetes epidemiology and CHD IMPACT models, diabetes model in development, discussion of data requirements.
- **18-23rd July 2010 Tunis, Tunisia:** Further hands-on training of CHD model and diabetes model. Introduction to stroke model in development/data requirements.
- **6-10th Dec 2010 Liverpool, UK:** CHD and diabetes model further training/data entry. Further discussion of stroke model/data requirements.
- **18th Apr 2011 Izmir, Turkey:** - Update on progress to date on CHD and diabetes model. Stroke model to be further labelled, user interface, training manual. Discussion of submission of abstracts/papers before end 2011, and whether they are individual or joint country papers.



WP6 Training:

- **24-26th July 2010 Tunis, Tunisia:** An introduction to health economics, economic evaluation by Dr. Awad Mataria. Discussion of WP6
- **18-19th Apr 2011 Izmir, Turkey:** - Mixed methods by Balsam Ahmed. Iterative approach to integrating WP4 and WP5. Discussion of policy interventions (e.g. salt reduction) across the four countries.

Frequent teleconferencing/Skype/email contact between training events for model progression and analysis, and all training materials and presentations are available in the MedCHAMPS Dropbox. There is further ongoing support in completing WPs (e.g. stroke model) and writing abstracts, papers from outcomes.

In summary, the training programmes across WP2, 4, 5 and 6 are successful to date, and have included hands-on training and individual country-specific support as required.

Future training will focus on support in completing the WPs and writing up of results for publication

MEDCHAMPS NEWS AND PROGRESS

WP5 final report

Data collection, analysis and report writing of WP5 were completed on time and the final report was submitted to EC on 30th March 2011. The overall aim of Work Package 5 (WP5) within MedCHAMPS has been twofold: firstly to undertake a situation analysis of current CVD and diabetes policy in the four partner countries, and secondly to analyse the contexts in which health systems manage CVD and diabetes in these countries. To achieve these aims WP5 has been designed around three distinct 'levels' of data collection: a level of conceptualization (by analysis of various policy and strategy documents), a level of awareness (by interviewing key informants), and a level of practice (by conducting fieldwork in a series of clinics).

It is evident that there is a formal recognition about the increased burden of non-communicable diseases in the partner countries. However, it is apparent that none of these countries has developed a comprehensive, multi-sectoral, well defined policy to deal with non communicable diseases.



EUPHA Conference 2011

A joint WP2 abstract was presented in the European Public Health Association (EUPHA) Conference 2011 in Copenhagen: Alarming cardiovascular trends in Eastern Mediterranean countries by MedCHAMPS' team.

The Lancet Palestinian Health Alliance Writers' Workshop

Both the CHD and the diabetes models are now populated, adapted and validated by the Palestinian population data. Recently, two abstracts and one paper have been drafted on the impact data. The WP5 team has completed the three level report of WP5 which was integrated with the other countries' reports and submitted to the EU in March 2011. Furthermore, one anthropological paper discussing the findings of level three of WP5 entitled "Patients' perceptions of access to Cardiovascular Diseases and Diabetes Mellitus care: A qualitative exploration from the Ramallah governorate in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT)" was drafted and presented at the Lancet Palestinian Health Alliance Writers' Workshop on 2-3rd March, 2011. The abstract of the same paper was recently submitted to *the Lancet* for publication.



WP6 progress

As the leading team of the economical evaluation component of the project (WP6), the Palestinian team has been working closely with partners to complete WP6. After holding a special training workshop on health economics and economic evaluation last summer with the participation of all country teams, the scope of work, design and the methodology were collectively developed and data collection has started. To follow up on work and plan for the next steps, a special full day session was held in the last MedCHAMPS meeting at Izmir in April 2011. The country teams presented their progress, future steps were discussed and a clear action plan for further work time was adopted.

The National Cardiology Congress in Istanbul

Two abstracts were orally presented to the National Cardiology Congress in Istanbul on 29th October 2011 by K Sozmen.

1. Decreasing trends in cardiovascular mortality in Turkey between 1995 and 2008
2. Explaining the decline in coronary heart disease mortality in Turkey between 1995 and 2008.