

20 Years of ESCOP: Symposium on 18 June 2009 in Cologne

ESCOP, the European Scientific Cooperative on Phytotherapy, was founded in Cologne on 18 June 1989. The vision of the original founder members was to establish a European umbrella organization of national societies and associations for phytotherapy. It was already evident at that time that the European review of medicines had not achieved a reasonable degree of harmonization in herbal medicinal products. The need to create harmonized criteria for assessment of the therapeutic uses of herbal medicinal products led to the concept of ESCOP monographs, the first ones being completed as early as 1990.

Over the past twenty years ESCOP has made rapid progress in elaborating monographs on the medicinal uses of plant preparations. More than 100 monographs are now available, together with numerous revisions to keep up-to-date with progress in pharmacological and clinical research. *ESCOP Monographs*, a book of 80 monographs, was published in 2003 and a Supplement is scheduled for publication during this anniversary year. An announcement will be made at the symposium.

ESCOP adapts its work programme to take account of developments in European legislation and in the assessment of herbal medicinal products, as well as the activities of national health authorities in implementing regulatory requirements. For many years now ESCOP has been acknowledged as a partner in regular discussions with European authorities.

On the exact date of ESCOP's anniversary, this scientific Symposium will take place in Cologne, the city where ESCOP was founded 20 years ago. Representatives from health authorities, academia, industry and all other interested parties are cordially invited to celebrate this important anniversary with us-to hear of recent developments in the assessment of herbal medicinal products, and the importance of phytotherapy from scientific, regulatory and political viewpoints.

The programme will consist of a reception at the invitation of the Mayor of Cologne in the Historic Town Hall on 17 June 2009 and a scientific symposium on 18 June 2009. Welcome addresses will be held by *Professor Dr. Vittorio Silano*, National Institute for Health, Italy, *Dr. Martin Terberger*, European Commission, *Professor Ioanna Chinou*, EMEA/HMPC, *Dr. Walter Schwerdtfeger*, German Ministry of Health. Speakers of the scientific and regulatory session will include *Mr. Simon Y. Mills*, ESCOP, *Dr. Heribert Pittner*, EMEA/HMPC, *Dr. Richard Woodfield*, MHRA, *Dr. Hubertus Cranz*, AESGP, *Professor Dr. Karin Kraft*, University of Rostock, *Professor Dr. Salvador Cañigueral*, University of Barcelona, *Professor Dr. Liselotte Krenn*, University of Vienna. A round table in the afternoon will discuss the issue: "The future of herbal medicinal products: Is there a need for scientific assessment?" The symposium will be chaired by *Professor Dr. Dr. Fritz H. Kemper*, ESCOP.

For further information please contact the ESCOP Secretariat, Exeter/UK (secretariat@escop.com) or the local organising committee at Kooperation Phytopharmaka, Bonn/Germany (koop.phyto.bonn@t-online.de).

The Board and Scientific Committee of ESCOP would like to congratulate ESCOP for the work done in the past 20 years and to express their best wishes for a successful future.

Dr. Barbara Steinhoff
Co-chairperson of the ESCOP Scientific Committee