

## EDITORIAL

# The ESCOP Research Committee – A further step in the scientific advancement of phytotherapy

ESCOP was founded in 1989 as an umbrella organization representing national phytotherapy associations across Europe, especially in their discussions with European medicines regulators.

The aims of ESCOP are to advance the scientific status of herbal medicinal products and to assist with the harmonization of their regulatory status at the European level.

One of the objectives of ESCOP is to support and initiate clinical and experimental research in phytotherapy. To this end, ESCOP has now formed a Research Committee, the role of which is to facilitate interaction in this field by creating a network of distinguished researchers in relevant disciplines.

At the latest annual general meeting of ESCOP, the Research Committee was established from the ranks of the ESCOP Board of Directors and the ESCOP Scientific Committee. The members of this core of the ESCOP Research Committee are:

Professor Dr. Fritz Kemper, Munster, DE, ESCOP Chairman

Dr. Simon Mills, Exeter, UK, ESCOP Secretary

Professor Dr. Salvador Canigueral, Barcelona, E

Professor Dr. Liselotte Krenn, Vienna, AUT

Dr. Didier Guédon, Carros Cedex, F

Dr. Georg Seidel, Cologne, DE

Dr. Barbara Steinhoff, Bonn, DE

Dr. Jan G Bruhn, Stockholm, SE, Coordinator

The ESCOP Research Committee is a network of researchers from academy and industry. The Research Committee network will work through the ESCOP website. Membership is by invitation only, and for a three-year term. So far, the following distinguished researchers have accepted the ESCOP invitation:

Professor Dr. Robert Anton, Strasbourg, F

Dr. Joanne Barnes, London, UK

Dr. Ezio Bombardelli, Milano, IT

Professor Dr. Pierre Delaveau, Paris, F

Dr. Mohamed H Farah, Uppsala, SE

Professor Dr. Gerhard Franz, Regensburg, DE

Professor Dr. Catherine Harvala, Athens, GR

Professor Dr. Michael Heinrich, London, UK

Professor Dr. Karin Kraft, Bad Doberan, DE

Professor Dr. Evelyne Ollivier, Marseille, F

Professor Dr. Dieter Loew, Wiesbaden, DE

Professor Dr. R Saller, Zurich, CH

Professor Dr. Volker Schulz, Berlin, DE

Dr. Fabio Soldati, Lugano, CH

Professor Dr. Arnold J Vlietinck, Antwerpen, B

Professor Dr. Hildebert Wagner, Munich, DE

Dr. Elisabeth Williamson, London, UK

Professor Dr. Hilke Winterhoff, Munster, DE

Members of the ESCOP Research Committee represent several disciplines relevant to phytotherapy research, such as pharmacology, pharmacognosy and toxicology, as well as clinical investigation and drug monitoring. They are active at a variety of universities, professional associations and commercial enterprises.

Except for their own initiatives to create collaboration with other members of the Research Committee, ESCOP will from time to time ask committee members for expert opinions and research priorities, as well as supervising monographs and alerting ESCOP to new developments and activities in the field.

Other topics for discussion within the Research Committee could be clinical studies, safety updates, consumer and/or prescriber studies, and also educational activities. As an example, the Research Committee will discuss the borderline between pharmacological and physiological effects.

ESCOP wishes to facilitate multi-centre research activities across Europe to determine efficacy and safety for herbal medicinal products and will be seeking funds to conduct generic research, with the support and input of academic supervisors from the Research Committee.

Finally, the Board of ESCOP may ask members of the Research Committee to review and support other ESCOP initiatives, e.g. to lecture at ESCOP symposia. In a way, the Research Committee will function as an “editorial board” for ESCOP.

It is true that there are other organizations and networks available to researchers in this field. However, ESCOP has already proven that such a network can

become an important instrument in collecting, evaluating and disseminating scientific information. The Research Committee now adds a new dimension to this work.

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