

Agathe Wehrli, FIP Pharmabridge Coordinator

The objective of Pharmabridge is the Strengthening of pharmacy services in developing (DC) and transitional countries (promoting contacts, networking), by supporting institutions and individual pharmacists. Pharmabridge has become part of the FIP Board of Pharmacy Practice as a BPP WG (YPG is a member) with its own terms of reference and budget and the Pharmabridge Coordinator has become an Expert member of the BPP. The programme is linking needs and offers expressed upon registration and in subsequent exchange of correspondence. The Coordinator also offers advice and guidance on various pharmacy related issues or refers to other instances like WHO, FIP Sections, YPG, IPSF etc.

Close to 1200 pharmacists from almost 90 countries have registered with Pharmabridge by now.

Book donations constitute the backbone of the programme. The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) has offered over 8000 highly valued reference books, including a copy of the American Hospital Formulary Drug Information (AHFS DI) book to each pharmacist from a DC registered with Pharmabridge. Other ASHP books have been donated in bulk (with transport organized and paid by the receiving party) for further distribution at country level. The American Pharmacists Association (APhA) offers every year 10 sets of 5 current reference books. Current Contents has made a one-time donation of over 3000 books. The Merck Company has also offered its publications. Several US chapters of IPSF are regularly forwarding books and journals to pharmacy schools and individuals. In addition, individual pharmacists send on books and journals, some on regular basis under a partnership with a pharmacist (mostly hospital pharmacist).. Last year YPG has appealed to its members to bring along books and audiovisual material for handing over to colleagues from DCs at the FIP Congress Pharmabridge session. This has been very successful.

Pharmabridge also organizes 4 weeks practice exposure for colleagues from DCs in practice sites in countries with more advanced pharmacy education and services systems. By the end of 2009, 16 pharmacists (mostly pharmacy teachers and hospital pharmacists, so far from Ghana, India, Nepal, Nigeria, Peru) have received training in the US, Canada or the UK. Five of them were below 35 years of age and include YPG members like Sunitha Srinivas from India, Aldo Alvares from Peru and Nilima Shresta from Nepal. For 2010 eight pharmacists have already been placed. An effort is being made to promote South-South collaboration/exchanges like India/Nepal and Ghana/Ethiopia.

Pharmabridge also sends experts to DCs for group training, thus a US GMP expert has run workshops in Mongolia, Ghana, Nigeria, and Sri Lanka, and another US expert has run seminars on pharmacotherapeutics in Nepal and Nigeria. A pharmacist from the United Arab Emirates is expected to go to Ethiopia (Jimma) for three days lectures on Pharmacoeconomics. A Canadian student has gone to Nigeria on student rotation.

The Pharmabridge coordinator has also visited DC's upon invitation to participate in specific events like the first Indian Community Pharmacy Conference in India (Pune 2006), the first Board Meeting of the Live Well Initiative (LWI) in Nigeria (Lagos 2008), and a national meeting of deans of schools of pharmacy in Ethiopia (Addis Ababa 2009).

Right from the beginning, YPG members have actively contributed to the success of Pharmabridge, e.g.. Diane Gal and Germano Ferreira have developed the original Access database and Diane is now looking after the Pharmabridge website. Christie Robinson is encouraging US pharmacists to regularly forward their AJHP journals, and as ExCo member of the Pharmacy Information Section, she is also helping with the development of a website with annotated on-line references to drug information that was initiated by Gisselle Gallego. Erica Caine is actively promoting Pharmabridge to US IPSF chapters and has developed guidance for them (see www.pharmabridge.org for Tips for book donations).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all YPG members for their support and to encourage YPG members to join Pharmabridge!