



EAPM Paper

The European Association of Psychosomatic Medicine (EAPM): Its foundation, first 10 years and future

1. EAPM

The EAPM is a multi-professional scientific organization of health care professionals working in the field of Psychosomatic Medicine and consultation-liaison (C-L) psychiatry, throughout Europe and beyond. The association was founded in 2012 at the Aarhus European Conference of Psychosomatic Research. It was formed through the merger of two European organizations: the European Association of Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry and Psychosomatics (EACLPP) and the European Network of Psychosomatic Medicine (ENPM). Whilst this merger was only achieved after intensive discussion it has led to a successful new organization with a promising future. This historical overview of EAPM is based on published articles and EAPM internal documents.

2. Roots

Psychosomatic medicine has a long tradition and a varying history in Europe. In the 1920's and 1930's, a psychosomatic movement emerged in a number of countries and in various medical disciplines, especially in internal medicine. The aims of this movement were: (a) to consider not only the biological but also psychological and social aspects in the development and course of diseases, (b) to advance research into the relationship between these bio-psycho-social factors, (c) to develop models of care that take into account the psychological and social dimensions of the sick person and (d) to integrate psychological and social interventions in the treatment of the medically ill [1,2]. Clinicians and researchers such as Erich Wittkower, Viktor von Weizsäcker and Alfred Jores in Germany, Johannes Judah Groen and Gerd Bastiaans in the Netherlands, David Leigh in England and Juan Lopez-Ibor in Spain conducted observational studies examining psychosocial aspects in the development and progression of physical illness. Contacts were made between these pioneers. However, the seizure of power by the National Socialists in Germany and the subsequent Second World War interrupted this development. But after the end of the war, the psychosomaticists resumed their dialogue. In the 1950's and 1960's new psychosomatic working groups arose in various European countries (groups led by David Leigh in the UK, Ferruccio Antonelli in Italy, Juan Lopez-Ibor in Spain, Alfred Jores and Thure von Uexküll in Germany, and J.J. Groen and Gerd Bastiaans in the Netherlands). Some of these researchers also developed a lively exchange with psychosomatic research groups in the USA [3]. Whilst early psychosomatic concepts focused on psychological causes of specific physical illnesses (the concept of 'psychogenesis'), these were later replaced by a wider multifactorial bio-psycho-social perspective on all illness [4,5].

In 1955 the first European Conference on Psychosomatic Research took place in London, followed by further European conferences,

initially annually and later every second year. From these meetings, a loose network of European psychosomaticists developed, who took turns to organize the conference in different countries but without establishing a formal organizational structure. In the 1970 the network expanded to include colleagues in North and South America and Far East Asia. The International College of Psychosomatic Medicine (ICPM) was founded with Wittkower as its first president. At the same time the Asian College of Psychosomatic Medicine was founded and the ICPM and the Asian College alternately organized an annual conference every 2 years [6]. The rapid development of empirical research required new channels for scientific exchange and two new journals were founded in Europe, the *Journal of Psychosomatic Research* and *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*. Clinical specialisations in Psychosomatic Medicine were established with clinical departments in university hospitals, in large general hospitals in Germany and, later, in Latvia [7,8]. In 2004, on the initiative of German psychosomaticists, the European Network of Psychosomatic Medicine (ENPM) was founded with its own website but no formal organizational structure [9]. However, in 2010, the members of this network decided to create a more solid organization and to convene its first general assembly in January 2011 in Warsaw. Gerhard Schüssler was elected speaker of the ENPM.

Consultation-Liaison (C-L) Psychiatry developed in different parts of Europe at different times starting in the 1970's and 1980's. It was variously influenced by important earlier developments in the USA [10]. These included Engel's advocacy of a comprehensive bio-psycho-social approach to medicine, the findings of psychophysiological research and social-psychiatry. Although C-L psychiatry services became established in many European countries (mainly in teaching hospitals) two examples stood out:

In the UK 'liaison psychiatry' started with a number of local developments led by enthusiasts. Then a national special interest group was set up within the Royal College of Psychiatrists led by Richard Mayou and Geoffrey Lloyd. This group aimed to create a forum for the discussion of clinical work, research and teaching on the psychological treatment of medically ill patients. It also led to the organization of a regular national scientific meeting and the agreement for training guidelines [11]. Later liaison psychiatry in the UK became an established subspecialty within the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Today, as a result of National Health Service policy, most UK general hospitals have a liaison psychiatry service [12].

In the Netherlands, C-L psychiatry services were established in larger university hospitals after psychiatric units had been founded within general hospitals. Documentation systems for C-L services were set up and the Netherlands Consortium for C-L Psychiatry was established in 1987 [13]. From this initiative, an increasingly intensive exchange developed with C-L psychiatrists and psychosomaticists in Europe and

North America. In 1987 the first meeting of a European Working Group (European Consultation-Liaison Workgroup, ECLW) took place in Amsterdam where it was agreed to develop a Europe-wide multi-centre study to record C-L activities in Europe. Research funding was obtained from the European Union for this 'European Collaborative C-L Study' [14], in which 56 centres in 13 countries participated.

The international network supporting this research study promoted the establishment of C-L services and organizations in many European countries [15–19]. It also became the nucleus for the establishment of a European C-L society, the EACLPP, which was founded in 1998 at its first meeting in Manchester [20]. With the support of the EACLPP, further multinational research projects were developed in the following years, some of which were funded by the European Union [21,22]. Working groups of the EACLPP developed guidelines for training in C-L Psychiatry and Psychosomatics [23] and – jointly with the Academy of Psychosomatic Medicine (APM) in the United States – a consensus statement on the processes involved in setting up and running C-L psychiatry services [24]. Further scientific conferences followed at annual intervals, every other year in conjunction with the ECPR.

3. The process of unification

At the 2010 Innsbruck ECPR conference Albert Leentjens, who was EACLPP president at that time and Wolfgang Söllner who was president elect, approached Gerhard Schüssler, the speaker of the ENPM, to discuss the creation of a single common organization for C-L psychiatry and Psychosomatic Medicine. Gerhard Schüssler was very interested in this idea and it was decided that two leading members of each organization should meet in November 2010 to discuss this topic in more detail.

In November 2010, Gerhard Schüssler and Hans-Christian Deter (ENPM) met with Albert Leentjens and Wolfgang Söllner for two days in Nuremberg. At this meeting, they developed a first draft of a proposal to create a common association and a telephone conference of the EACLPP Board was organized to discuss this proposal. The outcome of this telephone conference was then further discussed with the ENPM representatives. The resulting proposal included the following statements.

- The EACLPP Board and the ENPM representatives will propose the creation a new common European association to their respective associations.
- The new organization should be interdisciplinary and include psychiatrists, psychosomaticists, physicians of other specialties (such as internists or gynaecologists etc.), psychologists, nurses, and other health care workers who are active in the field of C-L psychiatry and Psychosomatic Medicine.
- The new association should have both individuals and national organizations as members.
- The name of this organization should be short and simple and describe the field of research, education and health care in which the organization is active. It was decided that the field is best described by the term 'Psychosomatic Medicine' and, in order to include the term C-L Psychiatry whilst keeping the title short, it was included as a sub-title. After thorough discussion the board agreed unanimously on the following name: **European Association of Psychosomatic Medicine - The European Society for C-L-Psychiatry, Psychosomatic Medicine, and Integrated Care**. The acronym would be simple: **EAPM**.
- The Journal of Psychosomatic Research should be the official organ of the new association (as it was previously of the EACLPP).

At its January 2011 meeting in Warsaw, the ENPM accepted this proposal and decided not to found its own European association alongside the EACLPP, as originally planned. At the meeting of the EACLPP Board in Vienna in March 2011, where Gerhard Schüssler participated as representative of the ENPM, the foundations for a common European association of both organizations were further discussed

and the following points added.

- The new association should offer full membership to all professions active in the field of C-L psychiatry and psychosomatic medicine. However, board members of the new association should require an academic degree as well as a track record in the field of psychosomatic medicine/C-L psychiatry.
- Full membership should also be possible for people living in non-European countries.

Following the agreement to merge the two organizations and to found a new European association, a broad and controversial discussion arose in both organizations in which the advantages and disadvantages of this initiative were discussed. After considering the concerns of some members, the general assembly of the EACLPP agreed to this project by a large majority at the 2011 scientific meeting in Budapest. The EACLPP Board and representatives of the ENPM then clarified legal issues and prepared a draft constitution for the new association. For legal and insurance reasons, it was agreed that the organization should be founded as an Austrian association (as of today there is no existing European law for associations). The EAPM was finally founded by the first general assembly at the ECPR/EACLPP meeting in Aarhus, in June 2012.

The new EAPM was a multi-professional scientific association. Its membership consisted of: (a) individual members, from among whom the Executive Council is elected, and (b) national societies for Psychosomatic Medicine or C-L Psychiatry. The Executive Council (EC), consisting of ten members, was elected by the General Assembly and was made up of half each from EACLPP and ENPM. Wolfgang Söllner was elected President, Gerhard Schüssler Vice President (find a list of the members of the EC since 2012 on the EAPM website www.eapm.eu.com). An Advisory Board consisting of representatives of the national societies organized in the EAPM advises the Executive Council. The EC decided to organize annual scientific conferences to be held in different European countries.

4. Ten years of building

In 2013, the first EAPM conference was held in Homerton College, Cambridge UK. This conference brought together 270 delegates. In addition, a joint pre-conference with the then American Academy of Psychosomatic Medicine (APM), now renamed ACLP, on what was the at that time brand new topic of Collaborative Care, was jointly organized by Michael Sharpe and Wayne Katon and gathered ≥ 100 delegates.

Over the following years the number of participants at the annual scientific conferences steadily increased to over 600 in the years before the COVID pandemic (see Table 1). The pandemic prevented a meeting in 2020. However in 2021, EAPM organized a successful virtual conference. This was a new experience which, despite the smaller number of participants, also had benefits: a larger number of young colleagues and more colleagues from Asian, South American and African countries took part. In 2022 we were able to meet again for the first time at the very successful conference in Vienna, Austria.

EAPM has grown substantially over the past 10 years. The initial membership of a few dozen individuals has now grown to ≥ 200 . In addition, 17 national societies are now affiliated to EAPM (see Table 2). Much work was invested by the administrator, Isabel Winter, in creating an informative website, a quarterly Newsletter to keep members informed and a list-serv for interactive exchange between members.

The primary goal of EAPM is to network researchers, clinicians, and teachers of various disciplines working in the field of psychosomatic medicine across national borders and to support young researchers in particular. To this end, EAPM has created awards for young colleagues to enable their participation in the annual scientific meetings. It has also established a Special Interest Group (SIG) for young researchers, which is becoming more active every year, with a member from this SIG opted to the board of the EAPM.

Table 1
Annual scientific conferences of the EAPM.

Year	Location	Country	Conference president	General topic	Number of delegates	Countries present	Joint pre-conferences with
2013	Cambridge	UK	Peter Hindley	Body and Mind – an all-age approach to Psychosomatic Medicine and C-L Psychiatry	350	34	APM
2014	Sibiu	Romania	Dan Dumitrascu	Care and cure: An integrated approach to psychosomatic medicine	273	35	Romanian Society of Psychosomatic Medicine, Romanian Balint Society
2015	Nuremberg	Germany	Wolfgang Söllner	Challenges and Chances for Psychosomatic Medicine	435	39	APM
2016	Lulea	Sweden	Ursula Wernicke	Transforming Health with Evidence and Empathy	>400	40	–
2017	Barcelona	Spain	Jordi Blanch	Bridging the Gap between Soma and Psyche	527	44	APM
2018	Verona	Italy	Mirella Ruggeri	Innovative and Integrated Approaches to Promote Mental and Physical Health	>600	45	CAPM
2019	Rotterdam	The Netherlands	Carsten Leue	Integrating Psychosomatic Care across Medical Settings and Disciplines	530	41	ACLP
2020				No conference because of COVID pandemic			
2021	Virtual conference		Jordi Blanch	Psychosomatics during the Pandemic	360	42	–
2022	Vienna	Austria	Christoph Pieh	New Challenges – New Approaches?	406	35	–
2023	Wroclaw	Poland	Joanna Rymaszewska	In preparation			
2024	Lausanne	Switzerland	Fritz Stiefel	In preparation			

ACLP Academy of Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry (USA).

APM Academy of Psychosomatic Medicine (USA) later renamed ACLP.

CAPM Canadian Academy of Psychosomatic Medicine.

Table 2
National associations affiliated with EAPM.

EAPM member since			
2013	Swiss Academy for Psychosomatic and Psychosocial Medicine	SAPPM	Switzerland
2014	German College of Psychosomatic Medicine	DKPM	Germany
	The Section of Psychosomatic Medicine of the Polish Medical Society	SPM	Poland
2015	Swiss Society of Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry	SSCLP	Switzerland
	Section of Consultation-Liaison-Psychiatry und Psychosomatics of the Austrian Society of Psychiatry and Psychotherapeutic Medicine	ÖGPP	Austria
	Flemish Association of Psychiatrists	VVP	Belgium
2016	The German Society of Psychosomatic Medicine and Medical Psychotherapy	DGPM	Germany
	Italian Society for C-L Psychiatry	SIPC	Italy
	Catalan Association of Psychiatry	SCPISM	Catalonia/ Spain
	Czech Association of Psychosomatic Medicine		Czech Republic
2017	Dutch Association of General Hospital Psychiatry	NVVP	The Netherlands
	Swedish Association of C-L Psychiatry	SACL	Sweden
2020	Canadian Academy of Psychosomatic Medicine	CAPM	Canada
	Netherlands Organization for Functional Disorders	NOLK	The Netherlands
2021	Spanish Association of Psychosomatic Medicine (SEMP)	SEMP	Spain
	Ukrainian Psychosomatic Medicine Association	UPMA	Ukraine
2022	Danish Society for Functional Somatic Disorders	DASEFU	Denmark

A number of other SIG's have been created for the international networking of colleagues in various research and practice areas (for more details see the EAPM website www.eapm.eu.com). It is particularly pleasing that research groups and initiatives have been formed at European level on the initiative of or with the support of the EAPM. Examples are.

- the EuroNet SOMA Workgroup which initiated several research projects on Somatic Stress Disorders (chair: Bernd Löwe [25]);
- the Encompassing Training in Functional Disorders across Europe (ETUDE, funded by the EU Horizon 2020 programme; chair: Judith Rosmalen [26]) which led to the establishment of a PhD program specific to this research at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands,
- an expert Delphi study on European research for the study of somatic symptom disorders, bodily distress disorders, and functional disorders (chair: Christina van der Feltz-Cornelis) [27],
- the multi-centre COPE-CORONA study (chair: Christiane Waller) investigating the burdens of health workers in the context of the COVID pandemic as well as other studies on psychosocial aspects of the COVID pandemic [28].

A “European Academy” was established to fund the travel of speakers to the various national European Societies. EAPM lectures were organized at the meetings of the national societies in Germany, Italy, Romania and Switzerland.

An EAPM Fellowship program to recognize individuals with outstanding achievements in the field, was launched in 2020. Thanks to several generous donations, a number of prestigious scientific prizes have been awarded each year: (1) the Frits Huyse Award for Lifetime Achievement in Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry and Integrated Care, (2) the Alison Creed Award for Psychosomatic Medicine and Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry and (3) the Elsevier-sponsored Young Investigator Award [29]. The winners of these prizes are listed in Table 3.

The Swiss “Carus Foundation for the Promotion of Research and Training in Psychosomatic Medicine” has generously financially supported the organization of master classes for young scientists. Since 2015, 2–3 parallel master classes have been held at the annual conferences of the EAPM.

EAPM is not the only international organization in the field of Psychosomatic Medicine and C-L Psychiatry and there is an intensive exchange with the others. Members of the EAPM have worked with ACLP to jointly prepare reviews and guidelines on specific topics [24,30,31]. Several joint symposia have been held as well as joint scientific pre-conferences at the EAPM annual meetings. Symposia have also been organized with the International College of Psychosomatic Medicine

Table 3
EAPM awards and awardees.

	Award	Awardee		
2014	Frits Huyse Award	Antonio Lobo	Zaragoza	Spain
2015	Frits Huyse Award	Francis Creed	Manchester	UK
	Alison Creed Award	Kurt Kroenke	Indianapolis, IN	USA
	Young Investigator Award	Adrian Loerbroks	Düsseldorf	Germany
2016	Frits Huyse Award	Jim Strain	New York, NY	USA
	Alison Creed Award	Michael Sharpe	Oxford	UK
	Young Investigator Award	Sebastian Kohlmann	Hamburg	Germany
2017	Frits Huyse Award	Graca Cardoso	Lisbon	Portugal
	Alison Creed Award	Per Fink	Aarhus	Denmark
	Young Investigator Award	Jorge Palacios	London	UK
2018	Frits Huyse Award	Marco Rigatelli	Modena	Italy
	Alison Creed Award	Arthur Barsky	Boston, MA	USA
	Young Investigator Award	Raphael Herr	Mannheim	Germany
2019	Frits Huyse Award	Fritz Stiefel	Lausanne	Switzerland
	Alison Creed Award	Else Guthrie	Leeds	UK
	Young Investigator Award	Jianlin Liu	Singapore	Singapore
2020	Young Investigator Award	Paul Lodder	Tilburg	The Netherlands
2021	Frits Huyse Award	Roger Kathol	Minnesota	USA
	Alison Creed Award	Winfried Rief	Marburg	Germany
	Young Investigator Award	Robin Groen & Anne van Gils	Groningen	The Netherlands
2022	Frits Huyse Award	Wolfgang Söllner	Nuremberg/ Innsbruck	Germany/ Austria
	Alison Creed Award	Jim Levenson	Richmond, VA	USA
	Young Investigator Award	Severin Hennemann	Mainz	Germany

(ICPM), the International Society of Behavioral Medicine (ISBM) and the European Society of Dermatology and Psychiatry (ESDaP). Joint pre-conference courses were organized with the American Society of Psychosomatic Medicine (APS) at their scientific meeting in Seville and with the Canadian Academy of Psychosomatic Medicine at the EAPM meeting in Verona.

We also want to mention the support EAPM receives from Elsevier. The Journal of Psychosomatic Research is the official organ of the association. The Journal publishes the best abstracts submitted for the annual conferences. News from the association and new research initiatives, clinical approaches and training formats are regularly published in the EAPM pages. And last but not least, Elsevier sponsors the annual Young Investigator Award selected by a review committee of the EAPM board members from the submissions to the JPR during the last year.

In 2020, Jordi Blanch from Barcelona succeeded Wolfgang Söllner as President of the EAPM. He led the organization through the difficult

time of the COVID pandemic, which brought with it special challenges for C-L psychiatrists and psychosomaticists in the care of patients suffering from COVID and their relatives. With his active support, a working group launched a multi-centre international study on the pandemic-related stresses on hospital staff.

In 2022 Michael Sharpe from Oxford UK, who had previously been President of ACLP, was elected as the new President of EAPM.

5. Future

The initial goal of founding EAPM, which was to become an instrument for networking researchers, teachers and clinicians in the field of PM and to motivate young colleagues for these activities, has been largely achieved. The next task is to increase the influence of EAPM on research, education, and medical care internationally. In order to achieve this we must develop into a larger and more professional organization. Steps already taken toward this end include: formalising the EAPM executive council as a Board, supplemented by dedicated task forces for administration, external relation and finance and membership and by our able administrator, Ms Isabel Winter. Increasing the support for our scientific meetings by a multi-year contract with a professional international conference organization. Increasing the number of international research networks. Developing the EAPM academy under the leadership of Judith Rosmalen. Increasing the number of affiliated national societies and also intensifying our cooperation with the other international organizations that share similar aims.

In summary, in the 10 years since EAPM was founded much has been achieved. However as we move into the next ten years much remains to be done toward achieving our ultimate goal of making medicine better for all patients.

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