



WPATH WORLD PROFESSIONAL
ASSOCIATION for
TRANSGENDER HEALTH

**(Formerly Known as the Harry Benjamin International
Gender Dysphoria Association, Inc.)**

A Non-Profit Corporation

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Update

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Submit Materials to: wpath@wpath.org

The Update is the official publication of the World Professional Association for Transgender Health. Items submitted to the editors for publication will be edited for clarity, readability, syntax, duplication, grammar, and spelling as well as gender-biased language. Materials should be formatted as a Word attachment and sent to the email address above.

REFLECTIONS: CHICAGO SWINGS

“In the main hall, he would be in his chair, the people would enter and as they came forward, they knelt to present their pleas and petitions before him.”

Sounds like the 14th century, and a Doge in a palace of a Venetian republic? Well, more about that later.

Chicago was at its sunniest, and the wind even dropped a notch to welcome the 20th Symposium of the Association. In January 2006 the Symposium seemed so far away, and we all felt that there was so much to do, but now it appeared Chicago's Randi Ettner and her local organising team had done us proud; a perfect hotel, grand meeting rooms, great beds, and fabulous food. I mean truly fabulous, I travel a lot and often desperately look forward to some home cooking, but the Embassy Suites Lakefront in Chicago really did the most delicious, nutritious and well balanced food of any hotel I've ever been to.

There were so many papers to choose from – I saw the interest and excitement on the faces of the people who filled the presentation rooms to standing room only, I saw the papers that failed to get over their research results or message, and the papers that went down swimmingly. No matter what else might be said, it was a rip roaring success of a meeting.

Its success can be measured in hard figures; 365 attendees – the largest attendance at any symposium – and over 100 papers presented. Financially it did well for the Association, leaving us with a good basis for the commencement of this year's work. Socially it was a great experience, not just meeting old friends, but seeing so many new members including those who had joined when they registered for the Symposium. Combined with the evening out at the Shedd Aquarium and being in the heart of Chicago –it was just great.

So, what were the highlights? After that, it felt greedy to want more, but more we got anyway. My personal best moments? Well, one was Joan Roughgarden's paper which was a delightful trip through the history of the natural world and the evolutionary influences on sex differentiation, which left us all wondering how those early single cell self-replicating organisms ever became us. Another was the French surgeon, Dr. Lengelé, discussing the techniques and drive behind the first full facial transplant – it was astonishing. Of the submitted papers, well of course some did fail to meet their promise, but most met it and did far more.

I roamed from room to room, taking in a bit here and a bit there, and then fell into a wonderful session on Saturday afternoon. When I arrived it seemed to have gone completely off topic. To this day I have no idea what the session was about, but I am sure somebody must know who I am talking about, (and if you do please let me know as I would like to send a note of personal thanks). The speaker was a woman, probably in her (be careful here) mid 70s, and she was talking about her life, her family and grandchildren. She spoke eloquently with humour and pathos and the audience was lapping it up. I thought about my family far away across the ocean, and I realised the audience of therapists, scientists and medical practitioners were hearing something very special – a summary of how well a life could be lived and how, by their commitment to training, research and the development of their skills, and their dedication to their patients and clients, they were supporting such well lived lives.

There are so many papers and sessions I could mention, many of them truly inspiring and I found myself wanting to get back to my desk – so much research to do, so many papers to write – but then again, it is events like the Symposium in Chicago that we need to remind us of importance of our work.

I must also say something about the pre-symposium. Vin Tangpricha organised and ran a two-day programme of training and knowledge refreshment for professionals in the field of transgender health. It was full to the brim with attendees, and (most importantly as to the

judge, of any conference) lots and lots of smiling faces. In fact the whole event from the start of the pre-symposium to the evening I left was just a feast of smiling faces.

I am sure I will miss some people out, but I will do my best. Thanks must be given to the staff of the Embassy Suites hotel; Bean Robinson and the office staff; the Executive Committee and all of the Scientific Committee, of course Randi Ettner and the local organising team, Vin Tangpricha and his helpers for the pre-symposium and of course everybody else who contributed by giving papers, and all the rest by being there – and smiling.

Now back to the beginning; the brilliance of being in the presence of truly caring people who believe in accommodating difference is that, if you (like me) are in a wheelchair, they get down to your level. It was so unlike those ghastly people at posh parties who hover around but who never look down (I don't go to them any longer and it is no loss). The people we met in Chicago always remembered to look down, and then they got on their knees, down to my level, so as to share an experience together, and not being above talking to anyone. It was a joy.

The next symposium will be in Oslo, Norway from June 17 - 20, 2009 and early details are already on the website – take a look at: http://www.wpath.org/events_upcoming.cfm

I'm sure the weakness of the dollar makes some North Americans wary of planning for Norway, but we have already done a great deal of the budget, and we are focusing on ways to ensure the event is as affordable as possible while still benefiting the Association. However we are very pleased to say that we are attempting to keep costs for registration similar to 2007 Symposium fees.

And from my own knowledge of traveling to the States, book early, it will get you by far the cheapest tickets – and the first tickets will be on sale next month.

We look forward to seeing you in Oslo.

Stephen Whittle
WPATH President

A Note about a Special Spring Opportunity from the Disorders of Sexual Development (DSD) Committee

At the HBIGDA/WPATH meeting of September 2003 in Ghent, Belgium, Heino Meyer-Bahlburg had convened a symposium, "Intersex Conditions", which involved presentations by four members of HBIGDA's Committee on Intersexuality (now WPATH'S Disorders of Sex Development [DSD] Committee) – namely Ken Zucker, Peggy Cohen-Kettenis, Tom Mazur, and Heino Meyer-Bahlburg, along with a talk by Arianne Dessens.

Based on a review of the available world literature, the various papers led to the overall conclusion that the prevalence of gender dysphoria and patient-initiated gender change varies dramatically between different syndromes of DSD, which has important implications for policies of gender assignment at birth. The set also included a useful overview by Ken Zucker of currently available psychological assessment methods in this area. As part of the preparation for the International Consensus Conference on Intersex in Chicago in September 2005, the presentations from that symposium were expanded into systematic review articles and published as a Special Section entitled "Gender Dysphoria and Gender Change in Persons with Intersexuality" in the August 2005 issue of the *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. The articles of this Special Section were indeed much used by Consensus Conference participants, cited in the papers summarizing the Conference as well as in other publications, and frequently requested as reprints.

Therefore, the outgoing chair of WPATH's Intersex Committee, Tom Mazur, with encouragement of the *Archives of Sexual Behavior* Editor, Ken Zucker, recommended to have the articles of this Special Section appended to the WPATH website. With approval of the WPATH Board, this has now been done.

E-access to the 6 papers described above, published in *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Volume 34, Number 4 (August 2005) is being provided to WPATH members for 2 months during Spring-Summer 2008 by the kind permission of Springer Science+Business Media.

To access these articles from May 16 - July 31, 2008, available free of charge exclusively to WPATH members:

- 1. Go to www.wpath.org and log in with your user name and password.**
- 2. Then click on Resource Library in the top navigation bar, and**
- 3. Once more on Resource Library in the left navigation.**

Cheers to all!

Chair

Professor Dr. Hertha Richter-Appelt (Germany)

Members

Peggy Cohen-Kettenis, Ph.D. (The Netherlands)

Tom Mazur, Psy.D. (USA)

Dr.rer.nat. Heino F.L. Meyer-Bahlburg (USA)

Walter Meyer III, M.D. (USA)

Norman P. Spack, M.D. (USA)

Ken Zucker, Ph.D. (Canada)