

Commission on Epidemiology Activity Report

David Thurman, Epidemiology Chair

As the new term of the Commission on Epidemiology commenced with a meeting on 8 December 2013, when the Commission affirmed its mission as follows:

“The principal responsibility of the Commission on Epidemiology is to develop and disseminate knowledge of the global burden of epilepsy and its risk factors from a public health and prevention perspective.”

In general, we understand that this mission involves continuing assessments of the best available epidemiological evidence, identifying epidemiologic research needs, helping to promote epidemiologic research capacity through guidelines and other means, and helping to promote program development toward the prevention of epilepsy and its adverse consequences. Toward these aims, the Commission currently supports three Task Forces: Prevention, Mortality and Comorbidity.

The purpose of the Prevention Task Force is to assess opportunities for epilepsy prevention and to develop strate-



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gies toward implementing prevention measures. This is a newly formed Task Force; it will address both primary prevention (i.e., the prevention of epileptogenic brain insults such as injury, stroke, or infection), early secondary prevention (i.e., the interruption of epileptogenesis following a brain insult), and secondary prevention (i.e., timely access to appropriate care following the onset of epilepsy). To this end, activities of the Task Force will include systematic reviews of: (a) studies of incident epilepsy, addressing causes and modifiable risk factors in both higher and lower income countries; (b) studies of epilepsy treatment gaps and treatment non-adherence; and (c) studies of effectiveness of epilepsy prevention strategies. Based on the results of these studies, the Task Force intends to offer recommendations identifying prevention priorities, as well as identifying major research needs to close gaps in understanding causes and risk factors in different world regions. As its work progresses, the Task Force anticipates collaboration with other ILAE Commissions, WHO, PAHO, and other relevant agencies.

The purpose of the Mortality Task Force is to describe the risk and causes of death among people with epilepsy, and to assess and recommend strategies to prevent premature death in epilepsy. The work of this Task Force continues from the previous Commission term. It is currently completing systematic reviews of studies to identify the incidence, risk factors, and causes of death in epilepsy, both

in high-income and lower income countries. Based on these, the Task Force intends to better quantify risk among subgroups of people with epilepsy and to recommend prevention strategies appropriate to different world regions.

Finally, the purpose of the Comorbidity Task Force is to identify and assess the burden of comorbidities among people with epilepsy, with a primary focus on psychiatric comorbidities, and as time and resources permit, cognitive comorbidities. This Task Force was initiated during the previous term. Through publication of its work and other means of disseminating its findings, the Task Force intends to increase awareness of the scope of epilepsy comorbidities, to promote and propose instruments and research to better assess epilepsy comorbidities, and to create training materials for clinicians to help identify comorbidities and improve understanding of their impact on epilepsy prognosis and quality of life.

At the end of this term it is our hope that the Commission will provide better insights into the scope, severity and impact of epilepsy on the global burden of disease, and that our work will help provide new approaches to alleviating that burden.

Commission Members: David Thurman, Chair, Dale Hesdorffer, Ettore Beghi, Arturo Carpio, Jakob Christensen, Wendyl D'Souza, Sandra Helmers, Jie Mu, Charles Newton, Kamadore Touré, and Emilio Perucca, MC Liaison.