

What is the European Pharmaceutical Students' Association?

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By Sean McAteer, a past president and honorary life member of EPSA

The European Pharmaceutical Students' Association (EPSA) is an association which represents over 120,000 pharmacy students in 32 European countries. It was founded in 1978 with Britain as one of the founding members. Its main aim is: "Develop the interests and opinions of European pharmacy students' and to encourage contact and co-operation between them."

EPSA projects

The career development project was conceived in order to give EPSA members an advantage when they graduate and move on into working life. This includes providing information on developing a curriculum vitae, improving interview techniques and providing information on various career opportunities across Europe. In addition, a job search section will be available soon on the EPSA homepage. Via this project, EPSA also provides articles and presentations from experts to help pharmacy students become what the World Health Organization (WHO) defines as a "seven star pharmacist".

The **Scientific Supplement** is a project that gives an opportunity for EPSA members to publish their research in the

pharmaceutical sciences as either an abstract or an article. It is an ideal opportunity for pharmacy students in Britain who are doing their final year project to get their first international research publication. The research is published in a supplement of the *EPSA Newsletter*.

EPSA encourages pharmacy students to get involved in **Health awareness campaigns**, especially in collaboration with students in other health care professions. The seven key areas that EPSA focuses on are cancer, heart disease, diabetes, AIDS, drug misuse, hypertension and asthma. Advice is provided on how to get involved in each of these areas.

The drug awareness project has two main aims. First, it aims to educate pharmacy students to a high degree of expertise about the misuse and abuse of drugs, and, secondly, to improve awareness of the facts surrounding drug misuse and abuse among 10 to 15 year olds.

The main aim of the **Pharmacy world project** is to provide more information about the pharmaceutical profession to secondary school and pre-university students.

The **EPSA Lifelong learning certificate** provides those pharmacy students who actively engage in professional and educational activities organised or promoted by EPSA the opportunity to gain tangible credit for these activities. It also introduces at an early

stage the important principles of lifelong learning as well as establishing the importance of documenting professional activities. The certificate is granted to those who achieve five lifelong learning points within a calendar year. The points can be obtained by attending the educational aspect of EPSA events or by actively participating in EPSA projects.

Euromob

The idea behind Euromob is to encourage students to take advantage of expanding their knowledge and experiences by travelling around Europe. Euromob gives EPSA members the opportunities to find and participate in jobs, research and exchanges. The Euromob project consists of four aspects:

- ▶ The Euromob exchange project is a practical project that enables pharmacy students to do research work in a foreign country. EPSA also provides updated information about academic exchange programmes like Erasmus, Socrates and Nordplus.
- ▶ EPSA encourages its members to participate in its twinning scheme, an exchange where groups of students spend up to a week in each other's country. Usually it is organised during term time. Over the past year or so twins have taken place in Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Portugal, France, Slovenia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Finland and the Czech Republic.
- ▶ It is often said that to have a fit mind you have to have a fit body. Thus EPSA provides information about different

sporting events being organised by its member associations.

- ▶ EPSA maintains a mobility database containing important information about its member countries. The database includes information about curricula, booklists, faculties and cities.

EPSA events

The **Annual EPSA congress** is a chance for 250–300 delegates from member countries to come together. The next congress will take place from 18–24 April 2005 in Bucharest-Sinia, Romania.

Registration is now open with reduced fees for those who pay before 25 March. The cheapest fee is €325 (about £230), including all accommodation, food, sightseeing and social events, including a gala ball. In the past participants have looked for sponsorship from their local school of pharmacy and it is also possible to apply to the EPSA support fund.

The EPSA **Summer university** provides a forum for EPSA students to interact educationally and socially in a laid back atmosphere. It is also intended to be an opportunity to meet European medical and dental students. The next summer university will be in July 2005 in Genoa, Italy. The cost of the summer university is usually about €150 (about £105) and includes all accommodation, food, sightseeing, presentations and social events.

The **EPSA Autumn assembly** is organised in association with the European Society of Clinical Pharmacy (ESCP). The next autumn assembly will be from 26–29 October 2005 in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

World Medical and Pharmaceutical Students' Symposium (WorldMaPS)

Following on from the success of two EPSA-IPSF joint symposiums on pharmacy education this new event will look at professional and educational collaboration between medical and pharmacy students. WorldMaPS will be held in November 2005 in Malta. Further information will be available closer to the event at www.worldmaps2005.org

The **Pharmaceutical sciences fair** is being co-ordinated by the European Federation for the Pharmaceutical

Sciences, with a special event taking place for EPSA members. This event will take place in June 2005 in Nice, France. Further information is available at www.pharmscifair.org

Local events

Many of EPSA's member associations organise events and activities throughout the year. Thus the local associations and EPSA co-operate together to promote these events on a European level.

EPSA publications

The *EPSA Newsletter* is published three times a year and contains information on the latest news within EPSA.

An **Annual report** is published after the EPSA annual congress with the conclusions of the workshops and "statements of opinion" that have been passed at the congress. It also contains the results of the EPSA annual questionnaire which seeks the views of pharmacy students across Europe on the annual topic of the association. The current topic is e-learning and e-pharmacy. For copies of the questionnaire e-mail epsaoffice@epsa-online.org

The **EPSA/IPSF joint document on pharmacy education** is a comprehensive collaborative study by pharmacy students worldwide of essential developments in pharmacy education.

EPSA also publishes position papers on key European initiatives.

Representing students

One of the most important aspects of EPSA is its work in representing the opinion of pharmacy students to key stakeholders across Europe. EPSA has a strong network with a range of European bodies and institutions. It also informs EPSA members about current European developments and how European developments may affect them at a local level. In 2004 EPSA established a new EU officer based at the Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU) to

strengthen these functions further. A new EU officer is appointed each year and British pharmacy students can apply for this position. EPSA is recognised as a Non-Governmental Organisation at the Council of Europe and as an associate organisation of the national union of students in Europe.

How to get involved

The best way to get involved in EPSA is to become an individual member. This ensures you get individual copies of all EPSA publications, receive updates by e-mail on EPSA activities and can participate in all EPSA events. You also have full speaking rights at the EPSA general assembly and the right to run for a position on the executive or a subcommittee. You can be an individual member of EPSA as a pharmacy student, preregistration trainee or as a first year qualified pharmacist.

It is also possible for a pharmacy student organisation in a school of pharmacy in Britain to apply to become an associate member of EPSA. This ensures all students in that organisation would become EPSA members. Associate member organisations participate fully in all EPSA activities but do not have voting rights at the EPSA general assembly. The highest level of membership is ordinary member. BPSA is the ordinary member association from Great Britain and has full voting rights at the EPSA general assembly. Further information on BPSA involvement in EPSA can be obtained from the EPSA liaison secretary, Lucy Wakefield (vicepres@bpsa.com).

Further information

For further information please contact the EPSA Permanent Office epsaoffice@epsa-online.org or visit www.epsa-online.org

Finally

With such a wide range of low cost flights to Europe now available there is no better time to take advantage of being a European pharmacy student. However, even without travelling EPSA has a lot of offer you. Get involved — it is a decision you will not regret. ✂