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Monash University Department of Community Emergency Health and Paramedic Practice Visiting International Fellows 2007

Björn-Ove Suserud*
Margret Lepp*
Ameë Morgans**

*School of Health Sciences, University College of Borås, Sweden

**Department of Community Emergency Health and Paramedic Practice, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

International collaboration is an important aspect of the academic world to foster learning relationships and identify cross-cultural opportunities for research and clinical practice comparison. After their initial meeting at the World Congress on Disaster and Emergency Medicine (WCDEM) in 2005, the Monash University Department of Community Emergency Health and Paramedic Practice (DCHEPP) team have maintained contact with some of the Swedish scholars to exchange information which is of mutual benefit to their respective research projects and clinical practice.

In the spirit of international collaboration, DCHEPP invited two distinguished scholars, Dr Björn-Ove Suserud and Professor Margret Lepp from the University College of Borås, School of Health Sciences, to visit the DCHEPP to discuss prehospital research with the DCHEPP team during their visit to Australia in September 2007.

About the visiting International Fellows

A brief summary of their background and achievements in prehospital research reveals that **Björn-Ove Suserud, RN, PhD** is an Assistant Professor and scientific leader of the Swedish Prehospital Research Centre, PreHospenn, at the University College of Borås where teaches subjects in Prehospital Emergency Care, Disaster Medicine, and Scientific Theory and Method. Additionally, Dr Suserud supervises several research projects on quality development within the Ambulance Service and has an interest in developing courses in Accident and Emergency Care. He has approximately twenty years of experience in planning and developing tuition in realistic accident and emergency exercises for health care personnel and students, and is currently responsible for developing the Specialist programme at advanced level for registered nurses in Prehospital Emergency Care.

Dr Suserud's associate, **Margret Lepp, RN, PhD**, is co-ordinator of International Relations at the School of Health Sciences. Professor Lepp has been involved with educational drama in her work as a researcher and consultant to students, patients and health care professionals for twenty years. Her main field of research includes drama relating to conflict management, and experiential learning within health care education. Professor Lepp is involved in the

internationally recognised research Dracon project (DRAMA+CONFLICT), and has travelled as a researcher in a professional capacity around the world.

Prehospital care: The Swedish Perspective

PreHospen is not only a local Research Centre but also a National Centre for the development of competence within prehospital emergency health care. The combination of education,

Professor Lepp (Left) and Dr. Suserud at Monash University Department of Community Emergency Health and Paramedic Practice.

research and the exchange of knowledge aims to develop health care which will be of benefit to both patients and health care professionals while advancing their caring activities. The Research Centre PreHospen conducts ongoing research and developmental work in close co-operation with the Ambulance Service, the Rescue Service and hospitals on local, regional and national level. The Centre also organises conferences within the field of Prehospital Emergency Care. The next conference will be held in Borås, Sweden in April 2009.

Australian College of Ambulance Professionals (ACAP) Conference

Dr Suserud and Professor Lepp commenced their Australian visit by participating at the ACAP Asia-Pacific International “*Challenge your Boundaries*” Conference on the Gold Coast, Australia, 26-29 September 2007.

Dr Suserud’s presentation “Experiences of Threats and Violence in the Swedish Ambulance Service” described the experience of threats and violence towards

ambulance personnel. Dr Suserud presented two studies from Sweden^{1,2} concerning this subject. The studies describe how ambulance personnel perceive, how they are subjected to, and are influenced by, threats and violence in their day-to-day work. The results show that threats and violence are a reality in ambulance service provision, and that measures need to be taken to reduce the negative effects of such encounters on ambulance personnel as well as patients.

Professor Lepp’s presentation “Drama and Conflict Management” described the Swedish Dracon program, which involves the use of specific drama techniques to explore and address conflict in education. Dracon is an interdisciplinary and comparative action research project aimed at improving conflict handling among adolescent school children by using the medium of educational drama.³⁻⁷ Dracon Sweden in collaboration with research teams in Malaysia and Australia (Adelaide and Brisbane) form part of Dracon International.

Results from Dracon International have shown that there is a need for drama programmes in conflict resolution, and as Professor Lepp indicates, modern society puts great resources into technological innovations but neglects the urgent need for social innovations such as new creative ways of managing conflicts.⁸ Professor Lepp maintains that practical skills or conflict competence cannot be taught in theory only, and that educational drama can be a way of processing out the experiences of conflicts. Through re-enactment or role-play the participants access a more meaningful experience of the conflict, including thoughts, feelings and body experiences. On the other hand the participants can keep a distance from these experiences through the fictional character of role-playing. In this way they can explore

alternative actions and their consequences. They can also explore how the conflict is witnessed by other participants, for instance, how the opponents experience the conflict by playing the role of the opponent.⁹ Although in a different educational context, the research undertaken by the Dracon team and Professor Lepp have resounding implications for ambulance paramedic training and emergency ambulance management of conflict and future research between Monash University (DCHEPP) and PreHospen may further explore these educational and training possibilities.

When asked of their perspective of other presentations at the Conference, both researchers reported that they could see a parallel in the culture of ambulance in Australia with regard to the continuing debate regarding national registration, standardisation and education.

Development of a Memorandum of Understanding

One of the main outcomes of the visit to Monash University was to produce a Memorandum of Understanding between the two universities, based on continued international collaboration with a focus on networking, research and exchange.

Left to Right: A/Prof Frank Archer (Director, DCEHPP), Dr. Ameer Morgans, Prof. Lepp and Dr. Suserud

The Memorandum involves the School of Health Sciences and the Research Centre PreHospen and DCEHPP. Collaboration between PreHospen and Monash is beneficial to both universities to foster learning relationships and identify cross-cultural opportunities for research and clinical practice comparison.

Other activities

During their stay in Melbourne, the international fellows also managed to squeeze in a tour of the Alfred Hospital, other campuses of Monash University, consult with DCEHPP postgraduate students and staff on existing research projects and meet with Victorian Government Emergency Health Disaster Plan Specialists. Time spent out of work enabled the visitors to also enjoy some sightseeing, theatre, and fine wine and dining.

Staff at the DCEHPP would like to thank Dr. Suserud and Professor Lepp for their contributions to the Department during their visit, and look forward to continuing and expanding our mutually rewarding and collegial relationship.

Please visit the University College of Borås, School of Health Sciences Prehospen website for more information about the PreHospen Team:

<http://www.prehospen.hb.se/engIndex.asp>

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