

MBC NEWS



Mediterranean Council for Burns and Fire Disasters (MBC)

Who Collaborating Centre for Prevention and Treatment of Burns and Fire Disasters



Thirteenth Meeting

General Assembly

**Nicosia, Cyprus
October, 2004**

President's Report 2002 – 2004

It is with particular pleasure this year that I open this 13th Meeting of the MBC and welcome you all to the General Assembly.

I say particular, as 2004 marks the 21st year of our activities – a milestone of adulthood and maturity by any standards. But it is not simply on the accumulation of years that we can be proud. Indeed, since 1983, when a dreamy group of us came together, we have grown and constantly expanded at all levels – organizational, scientific, operational, research and educational. And to take only the latter feature, we have provided more than one hundred (100) scholarships to promising surgeons and health personnel, a record of pride for any organization. All these positive activities have been duly rewarded by official support, financial aid, extended relations and international recognition.

With these remarkable achievements of your organization, it is therefore again my pleasant duty to give you a brief report, and some personal reflexions, on the activities of the MBC for the period 2002-2004. I shall limit myself to highlights, as a more detailed account will be given by our untiring Secretary General, whose report I commend to your approval.

World Health Organization

As the symbol of WHO on this letterhead attests, the MBC is a fully active scientific organization within the network of WHO Collaborating Centres. Besides this function, the MBC also the Coordinating Office for all the emergency/humanitarian Collaborating Centres, a service much appreciated by WHO, and a source of pride for us.

Our "Annals" carry The WHO Page, a regular feature that provides international health information to readers who would not otherwise have access.

The WHO Emergency Library kit carries our President's Dictionary of Disaster Medicine as standard reference for disaster management.

Also, among the 10 Scholarships that MBC provides annually, two are earmarked as WHO/MBC scholarships.

United Nations

The MBC is officially accredited Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Our organization is the only professional body concerned with burns science and fire disasters in the world with such UN accreditation; and we take this distinction very seriously.

MBC has also become an institutional member of ACUNS – the Academic Council on the United Nations System, and has contributed to its congress in 2004.

The European Union

The MBC already had professional ties with the predecessor of the EU, the European Commission. We now participate in the EU BurNet programme and manage the EUMEDIS project – an activity which we have won against stiff international competition. Under MBC leadership 17 Euro-Mediterranean countries are interlinked through high-tech communications to ensure collective performance and high standards in burns and fire management and training. This is generously funded by the EU, and we are accountable for it.

International Association for Humanitarian Medicine Brock Chisholm

Although independent of the MBC, this high-level humanitarian organization has close ties with it, and several members serve jointly on both organizations. IAHM is fortunate to have solid funding, commensurate with its ideals and activities, as it enjoys much respect and recognition for its valuable work. It has created the imaginative "World Open Hospital" network, within which MBC is operationally active.

International Federation of Surgical Colleges

Since 1992 the MBC has been a Specialty Member of this prestigious surgical body. We provide two IFSC/MBC Scholarships annually to young deserving surgeons. The MBC has twice hosted the IFSC Executive at its Headquarters in Palermo. The President is Secretary General of the IFSC.

Other international relations

Besides this (non-exhaustive) list of scientific and organizational relations mentioned above, the MBC maintains close relations with national and international bodies concerned with burns, reconstructive surgery, fire disasters and humanitarian work, such as the Société Française pour l'Etude et la Recherche des Brûlures, the Pan-Arab Society of Plastic, Reconstructive and Burn Surgeons, the Giuseppe Whitaker Foundation and many others. For our 2004 General Assembly we are the guests of the Cyprus Society of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery, and I take this opportunity to thank it for receiving us on this historically aesthetic island of Aphrodite.

Conflicts, disasters and humanitarian service

The last few years have seen an escalation of conflicts, insecurity and man-made disasters, which have somewhat curtailed our movements but, on the other hand, have given us opportunities to serve in emergencies and humanitarian situations.

On behalf of WHO the MBC sent burn and fire experts to *Nigeria*, where a disastrous fire due to kerosene explosion had occurred, causing very high mortality and morbidity.

In *Iraq*, at the height of the war no injured patient or severely ill person was allowed by the military to go out for treatment. The MBC facility in Palermo Civic Hospital and the Graz University Hospital were the first and only institutions to receive and treat such patients, through the World Open Hospital (WOH) network of IAHM and its affiliates. A sign of international recognition of our standing.

Publications

The *Annals of Burns and Fire Disasters*, official organ of the MBC is now in its 17th volume and appears regularly as a quarterly with an average run of 3300 copies per issue, which is no mean feat. It carries a regular feature, "The WHO Page", much appreciated by WHO and by our readers.

The journal also carries, as piggy-back supplement, the *Journal of Humanitarian Medicine*, which is the organ of the International

Association for Humanitarian Medicine, the only such journal in this field.

Honours

Within our growing membership and international presence, several individuals and leaders of the MBC have been receiving honorific and academic accolades. This reflects not only on the personal worth of our members but also on the value of MBC corporately.

I congratulate all those so honoured. In our turn, we honour the memory of Johnny with the MBC International J. Ioannovich Award.

Finance

Our organization is fortunate in having a sound budgetary base which shows that donors appreciate the quality of our work, the value of our mission, and the openness of our organization. Thus the generous financing, by statutory law, of the MBC by the Italian and Sicilian Regional governments assures our finances on a continuing base and makes our programming stronger and more real. Our other scientific activities are also solidly financed, but these do not happen just automatically; they are the fruits of serious planning, valid work and wise competition for funds. Thus the European Union provides the funds for the extensive EUMEDIS programme. Of course we are answerable and responsible for all our expenditures and activities. The expression of confidence by the donor agencies imposes upon the MBC more rigour and discipline, which we do not shun.

Goodbye

As we celebrate our 21st year, I have decided that the time has come for me to thank you all, individually and through your committees and groups, for the confidence, support, encouragement and friendship extended unstintingly over these many years, and to pass the reins to new hand, new minds, and new dreams. A new, younger team should now take the lead and carry us forward. So with much emotion and warmest remembrances I say Goodbye to you all, and welcome the new team with hopes and assurance. I am sure you will give it as much support and consideration as you have reserved for me.

Best wishes, then, for "une bonne continuation", and many, many, thanks.

S. William Gunn
MD, MS, FRCS, DSc (Hon)
President



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Secretary General's Report 2002 – 2004

All activities of the Mediterranean Council for Burns and Fire Disasters in the years 2002–2004 can be summarized as follows:

a) Sector of prevention and public education

The MBC has continued to develop the action of prevention and public education. On request, the material (videos, folders, manifestos, etc.) produced by the MBC is supplied to the various partners and all public and private structures engaged in this sector.

New material will of course be taken from the contents of the CD ROM produced, at the end of the project, in collaboration with the Italian Civil Defence, as will be reported below, together with the contents of the Burnet Project, once it is complete.

b) Sector of disaster and emergency

The project of collaboration between the MBC and the Italian Civil Defence, the purpose of which was the creation of "Self-teaching information and training multimedia modules for the management of first sanitary action in industrial disasters", has been completed. The final product, consisting of a richly interesting CD ROM, is a valid aid in terms of information/training regarding sanitary manoeuvres in first medical aid in the event of severe accidents and industrial disasters.

The action of the MBC in this sector has increased since its appointment as a WHO Collaborating Centre.

The "WHO Page" published in *Annals* has been further enlarged and incorporated into the *Journal of Humanitarian Medicine*.

The action of support of the International Association for Humanitarian Medicine Brock Chisholm has continued.

c) Sector of cultural exchange between Member countries

The Council's scholarships were again awarded in 2003-2004 to physicians and nurses to enable them to attend Burns Centres and Plastic Surgery Departments in the various countries of the Mediterranean area for a period of one month.

In the last two years scholarships were awarded to the following physicians and nurses:

Year 2003

Physician:	V. Zratiqi, M.D.	Kosovo
Nurses:	Mr J. Lazic	Yugoslavia
	Ms A. Molon	Italy
	D. Salillari	Albania

Year 2004

Physicians:	M. Makboul, M.D.	Egypt
	A. Elmallah, M.D.	Egypt
	F. Zor, M.D.	Turkey
	M. Djazar, M.D.	Tunisia
	K. Keravdic, M.D.	Bosnia
Nurses:	Mr G. Loizos	Cyprus
	Ms G. Palladino	Italy
	Mr A. Agolli	Albania

d) Sector of cultural promotion, study, and research

In order to develop the activities in this sector and to increase the dissemination of its activities, the MBC has taken part in various scientific and congress activities.

- In November 2002, as Applicant of the Eumedis BURNET Project, it participated in Bari, Italy, in the Meeting: "Telemedicine: Community Projects and Euromediterranean Experiences Compared", organized by the European Community Information Society Technologies and by the University of Bari.
- In May 2003, the MBC, as NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, was invited to the "Global Forum on Humanitarian Medicine in Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery", organized in Geneva by the Humanitarian Association "Coeurs pour Tous".
- In September 2003, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Prague Burn Centre, the MBC was invited to participate in the 9th Annual Conference of the Czech Burn Society, organized by the Czech Burn Society of the Czech Medical Association, J.E. Purkyně, and the Prague Burn Centre.
- In December 2003 the MBC collaborated with the Polish Burn Association in the realization of the "2003 Workshop of the European Club for Paediatric Burns (ECPB)", which was held in Zakopane, Poland.
- In December 2003, as NGO in Special Consultative Status with the ECOSOC of United Nations, the MBC took part in the realization of the 4th International Symposium on "Humanitarian Medicine and Health for All", which took place in Rome, Italy, organized by the Region of Lazio, the Municipality of Rome, Tor Vergata University, Rome, and the International Association for Humanitarian Medicine Brock Chisholm.
- In September 2004, at the 35th National Congress of the Ital-

ian Society of Plastic Surgery, the MBC presented the Eumedis BURNET project.

- In October 2004 the MBC was invited to participate in the International Conference and Public Debate on the Eumedis Project "Genetics and Impact on Medical Practice of Mediterranean Countries - Eumedis Projects to confront", which was held in Alexandria, Egypt, organized by the Institute of Genetics, Bologna University, Italy, Applicant of the "Eumedis Project on Medical Genetics".

e) Promotion of spirit of co-operation between the Countries

The start-up of activities for the realization of the BURNET Project has certainly enlivened the spirit of co-operation between Member countries of the MBC. Even if a series of unforeseen problems in no way attributable to the MBC, as I have explained in various letters sent to the seventeen partners in the Project, has delayed the Project's evolution, I am convinced that the time lost can be concretely made up, also because the European Commission has granted an extension of one year in the deadline. BURNET must be completed in the year 2006.

After resolving the bureaucratic problems with Brussels, it is the MBC's intention to include Libya and Portugal in the realization of the project, two countries which at the moment of the Project's presentation it was not possible to include among the Partners as they did not figure in the list published in the official announcement.

f) Dissemination of the MBC's activities

The publication of *Annals of Burns and Fire Disasters*, the MBC's official organ, has continued regularly - it is now in its seventeenth year of publication. The authors of articles from outside the European area who ask the Journal to publish their scientific papers are increasingly numerous, a sign of the ever more international character that the Journal has achieved. This is confirmed by the high number of visitors to our web site - www.medbc.com/annals - in which the Journal is also published. In the site it is possible to find over 600 articles. The number of contacts up to now is about 30,000. The circulation of each issue of *Annals* is about 3400 copies, which are sent to all parts of the world.

The creation in the site of the section *Medit-line*, in which papers are inserted pending publication in *Annals*, is much appreciated by the authors. It is thus possible for them to have their papers widely diffused online.

Since volume XIII, *Annals* has hosted the *JOURNAL OF HUMANITARIAN MEDICINE*, the official organ of the International Association for Humanitarian Medicine Brock Chisholm (IAHM) and the WHO pages.

g) Future MBC activities

The completion of the **BURNET Project** is the primary objective to be achieved in the next two years.

The interconnection via the Internet of 17 burns centres will make a concrete contribution to the standardization of various aspects of the burn disease and fire disasters. The use of the web-portal will make it possible to have a continuous exchange of information among the Partners in order to create common protocols in the sector of prevention, treatment, and functional and psychological recovery of the burn patient. It will also be possible to prepare online courses for information and training of the public and of all operators involved in this dramatic pathology. In mass burns disasters it will be possible to have co-ordinated management of the emergency action between the various burns centres and between these and the peripheral hospitals, and to optimize a service of telemedicine.

UPTUN Project: the MBC was invited to participate in the realization of this Project, financed by the European Commission. The Project includes 39 Partners and the general objectives are: to study and suggest new technologies to prevent and manage a fire disaster in a tunnel. Even if the participation of the MBC is finalized only to propose a model of emergency protocol of self-assistance and first aid to the victim, the call for collaboration can be considered to be one of great prestige.

Nicosia 22 October 2004

Michele Masellis, M.D.
Secretary General