

## Editorial

# The First Euro-Asian Congress of Pharmacoepidemiology: A Real Instance for a Multidisciplinary Approach

The first Euro-Asian Congress of Pharmacoepidemiology (EAPEC 2018) was held in Shiraz (Iran, January 3<sup>rd</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> 2018).<sup>[1]</sup> The organizer committee which was led by the Iranian Food and Drug Administration was the health policy research center affiliated to Shiraz University of Medical Sciences.

The discipline and the sciences of Pharmacoepidemiology are generally defined as the study of drug effects in large populations, but this definition seems to have a broad spectrum of coverage and sometimes misleading. Epidemiologists generally perceive the discipline as a branch of clinical epidemiology which deals with usage frequencies of medications, ratios, and proportions in a large population. In their point of view distribution of, causes and determinants of drug use are mostly focused and discussed. In contrast, pharmacologists, especially with a background education in medicine consider the aforementioned discipline as a scientific medium to document and discuss adverse drug events in large scale. They habitually seek for a pharmacological basis and receptor-related justifications regarding risk management reports gathered from large populations and the mechanisms behind these adverse reactions. Being in the frontiers of medication usage and administration to the patients at the pharmaceutical care departments of hospitals and medical rounds, clinical pharmacists are another major stakeholders of Pharmacoepidemiology with the aim of preventing and reporting extrinsic medication-related problems, documentation, and analysis. At the first glance, they prevent or manage medication-related problems (e.g., indication, dose and interaction issues of drugs, medication errors, and adverse drug reactions) at the level of individual patients, but a short and brief search of PubMed search engine or SCOPUS database for the published literature in the field of drug utilization studies, Pharmacovigilance and pharmacoepidemiological research shows their real and undeniable scientific contribution to the field both epidemiological and therapeutic wise. The other important contributors to the Pharmacoepidemiology discipline are health policy specialists and governmental sector or regulatory agencies for drugs. They mostly need the results of drug utilization studies for planning more cost-benefit and cost-effective policies at the national level of countries and manage their limited budget for drug manufacturing and import. Pharmacoepidemiology academicians (with different undergraduate backgrounds) are also the main and central part of stakeholders who

notably contribute for the promotion of the discipline through recruiting smart students inside it and define their thesis projects according to the needs of drug manufacturers and grant holders in a framework of pharmacoepidemiological research questions. They commonly consider it as the science of epidemiology for measuring different aspects of drug utilization and clinical effects in different ethnicities or different populations using certain indices to compare and analyze the present situation of drug usage and outcomes. They may also propose some practical measures to improve the health-related indices for medication usage at the level of populations.<sup>[2]</sup>

Despite elapsing more than 60 years of the active life of Pharmacoepidemiology in Northern Europe, the discipline seems to be very young in the Middle-East. This does not necessarily mean it is missed or ignored in this region; but in fact, some parts of Pharmacoepidemiology (as an academic course and a research type of methodology) is embedded in the similar academic courses of clinical pharmacology, clinical pharmacy, pharmacy administration, and some parts of it like Pharmacovigilance systems which are located at the ministries of health and drug regulation agencies.<sup>[3]</sup> In the recent years, many developing countries of the Middle East region such as Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, and UAE started to pay special attention for the academic courses and regulatory benefits of the study of medication effects in a large population which is noticeably reflected in hosting and holding related scientific meetings, seminars, and national and international congresses such as EAPEC 2018.

The holding of the 1<sup>st</sup> Euro-Asian Congress of Pharmacoepidemiology was based on the philosophy of a need for providing a real instance of direct communication for sharing and exchanging the practical experiences of the related or interested scientists and researchers inside the field apart from their background curriculum of academic education [Figure 1]. EAPEC 2018 authorities thought that this may help for starting up some initiatives to promote the discipline in the region and also to reach a common understanding of Pharmacoepidemiology between different contributors including the regulatory bodies and authorities.

In this scientific event (EAPEC 2018) which was officially opened by the Iranian general director for the National Food And Drug Administration (Professor G. Asghari), the president of Iranian Society of Clinical



**Figure 1:** The logo of EAPEC 2018 which denotes the multidisciplinary approach of drug studies in large populations

Pharmacy specialists (Professor J. Salamzadeh) and also the president of EAPEC 2018 (Professor K. B. Lankarani, the former Iranian Minister of Health And Medical Education [MOHME] and currently the director general for the Iranian Health Policy Research Center), keynote speakers from Switzerland, Sweden, Iran, The United States, Canada, Turkey, Iraq, the Netherlands, Azerbaijan, and Taiwan presented their speech for the attendees in the 3 days of Congress (3<sup>rd</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> January 2018). According to the opening report of the scientific secretary of EAPEC 2018, Dr. P. Peymani (PharmD, Ph.D., who is the first Iranian graduate of the discipline of Pharmacoepidemiology inside Iran) 120 out of a total of 146 received abstract was accepted by the scientific committee and presented as posters. Twelve educational workshops were also held for interested and young researchers in the field in which instructors from various countries shared their practical expertise to promote the discipline of Pharmacoepidemiology locally and in the Middle East region. Dr. N. Yousefi (PharmD, PhD, the executive secretary of the Congress) and her assistant Dr. M. Zare (PharmD, MPH) have both managed the congress agenda<sup>[4]</sup> and the scientific atmosphere in case of executive affairs at the top international level for similar events which helped to achieve a better understanding and active contribution of the attendees of the Congress.

Finally, this scientific event was closed officially with the conclusive speech of the Chairman of EAPEC 2018 (the author of this editorial) who also declared the final statement for EAPEC 2018. This statement was mostly about the situation and promotion of Pharmacoepidemiology in the hosting country (Iran). All stakeholders and academic scientists who attended the Congress urged for the necessity of establishing a



**Figure 2:** Establishment ceremony for a permanent secretory office in the congress which will be promoted to the national Iranian Pharmacoepidemiology Center in near future

permanent secretarial office in Shiraz (Iran) for active follow-up of the next annual meetings and also for following up the establishment of a National Iranian Pharmacoepidemiology Center [Figure 2], and forming big local databanks with technical support of Iranian Food and Drug Administration. They also urged for the establishment of distinct academic postgraduate MSc and Ph.D. courses specially designed for the discipline of Pharmacoepidemiology with the assistance of MOHME. The chairman of EAPEC 2018 also proposed and urged for establishing the “Iranian Pharmacoepidemiology Association” with the contribution of all interested academic scientists of the field and also relevant stakeholders like regulatory bodies (Iranian Food and Drug Administration) and insurance companies which welcomed by the attendance and other authorities. In the closure ceremony, the Iranian official textbook for teaching Pharmacoepidemiology to Medical and Pharmacy students (edited by Dr. P. Peymani *et al.*) which contains free translations of relevant chapters from standards international textbooks was also unveiled.<sup>[5]</sup>

At the end of the closure ceremony of the Congress [Figure 3], Shahid Beheshti University of medical sciences (Tehran, Iran) and Isfahan University of medical sciences (Isfahan, Iran) were the candidates and elected for hosting the next meetings of the Euro-Asian Congress of Pharmacoepidemiology in 2019 and 2020, respectively.

The editorial team of Journal of Research in Pharmacy Practice who actively contributed for organizing and planning of EAPEC 2018, welcomes all efforts for arranging similar meetings in Asia, Europe, and especially in the Middle East region and considers these meetings as a medium for synergy of all who are interested in the epidemiology of drug use in large



**Figure 3:** The closing ceremony of the EAPEC 2018 Congress

populations and medication safety for the sake patients and promoting global health. This will hopefully make the world of medication usage more secure and safe.

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