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YICAP/ECAP international young investigators paper and grant writing workshop

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The “YICAP/ECAP International Young Investigators Paper and Grant Writing Workshop” in Rees (September 18–19 2014), Germany, brought sixteen young researchers from ten different institutions in three European countries together with editors from *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* (ECAP). YICAP (Young Investigators in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry), a German organization for young researchers, had organized the meeting together with Prof. Hebebrand as the Editor-in-Chief of ECAP. The meeting was kindly supported by the Karl Moik Foundation for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Aachen, Germany and Prof. Hebebrand. It was designed as a follow-up to a writing workshop in Berlin in March 2014, now including also participants from the Netherlands and Finland.

The first day started with a warm welcome by Jochen Seitz, one of the speakers of YICAP, followed by a summary of the topics covered during the Berlin meeting. In an excellent overview, he pointed out the importance of abstract and title and the challenge to focus on the main findings, which was complemented by participants’ writing experiences after the first workshop. Indeed, it appeared that several recommendations had found their way into the participants’ work and had led to improvements, especially regarding time-management techniques and ways to counter writer’s block. Prior to the meeting in Rees, participants had shared their work in progress in small groups of three or four participants. Next, these papers and grants were discussed in two intense peer-to-peer supervision

sessions. Similar to the first workshop, this format was experienced as extremely valuable. Feedback from peers in the broader field adds new perspectives and discloses strengths and weaknesses that may be overlooked by members of the own working group. At the same time peer-to-peer supervision provides an open and constructive environment to discuss potential problems or errors with peers at a similar stage in their scientific careers. In between the two sessions, Georg von Polier, also speaker of YICAP, went deeper into the art of writing a sound and structured discussion. He focused on the delicate balance between correct and professional interpretation of results on the one hand and trying to “sell” the paper on the other. After a stimulating program of alternating input talks and active discussion sessions, the day ended with a brainstorming round table discussion concerning proven procedures and new ideas for future workshops, focusing on building a European Young Investigators Infrastructure in the form of an annual ESCAP Academy.

In the evening, participants of the workshop together with ECAP editors were gratefully invited to Prof. Hebebrand’s house in Rees for joint cooking and eating. As participants and editors worked together hand in hand, guided by Jochen Seitz and Georg von Polier, an astonishingly sophisticated meal was prepared and consumed with intense discussions until late in the evening—many thanks again!

The next day the workshop participants met with three renowned editors from ECAP: Prof. Hebebrand from Essen, Germany, Prof. Hoekstra from Groningen, The Netherlands and Prof. Polanczyk from Porto Alegre, Brazil. The editors provided the young researchers with highly appreciated reports of their own research careers, advice for career management and—most valuable—pointed out

several unwritten rules for writing articles, selecting journals and dealing with editors and reviewers. The informal and benevolent atmosphere of the meeting facilitated personal questions from young researchers and a lively discussion.

Lastly, the results of the group discussion concerning future workshops at the European level were presented to the senior scientists. The participants pointed out that one crucial aspect of any future workshop should pertain to the inclusion of peer-to-peer supervision of work in progress, similar to that of the seminar in Rees. Another point was to focus a potential workshop on an overarching topic, be it a research field like ADHD or eating disorders, or a meta-topic like the influence of maturation on a specific psychiatric disorder. Finally, such a workshop could be combined with preparations for a (European) grant application to start a more continuous cooperation. The participants offered to assist in planning such a workshop for young researchers at the upcoming ESCAP congress in June 2015 in Madrid, Spain.

Online feedback after the workshop expressed the satisfaction of the young researchers with both the topics and the organization of the meeting and emphasized the need for further workshops of this type. Similar to the Berlin workshop in March 2014, the international participants again recognized the advantages of working in small peer groups and of the informal “getting together” with the senior researchers. Suggestions for improvement included to extend the workshop to three days, to further address career advancement of psychologists and to partially include experienced senior researchers in the working

groups. Additional ideas were to further structure the peer-to-peer supervision sessions by sending specific feedback questions along with the manuscripts in progress and to focus additionally on writing exercises during the workshop.

Taken together, the YICAP/ECAP Workshop thus provided an excellent opportunity for young researchers to learn from each other and from the experts in the field about grant and paper writing, to discuss ongoing research projects and challenges and to get involved in a future ESCAP research academy.

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