

Johannes Hebebrand revives the ESCAP Research Academy, its vision and its ambition

The urgent need to interact

Imagine a bit better than ordinary country house in Rees, a small North Rhine-Westphalian town just off the Rhine river, close to the Dutch border. A band of young men and women occupy the kitchen, making an effort to produce a tasty meal for their respected tutors. With visible tension they go to the extreme. They dance around the stove, performing something they were not trained for.



Hebebrand: "Within our specialty much is at stake" (photo: UDE/Frank Preuß).

The seniors are renowned professors in child and adolescent psychiatry, enjoying one of their rare reunions and awaiting the well-meant amateur cookery by a group of young doctors, trying to specialize in the same discipline. "You guys make us a meal and we will teach you something", that was the general idea.

The Rees house was the unofficial re-birthplace of ESCAP's Research Academy. Back in 1998 professor Helmut Remschmidt inaugurated the ESCAP Research Seminars – a first session took place in Heidelberg. A series of successful annual seminars followed. This tradition is now being continued – the ESCAP Research Academy promises a dynamic future for the young investigators who perhaps can cook a little bit, but they sure intend to excel in child and adolescent psychiatric research. The ESCAP knowledge base is their starting point and *not so young* professor Johannes Hebebrand from Duisburg-Essen is their promotor and re-founder of the Research Academy. As a senior, he also sat at the Rees dinner table.

Hebebrand: "A total of 33 national child and adolescent psychiatric associations are currently members of ESCAP. Together they represent a huge treasure of knowledge and experience.

And... they have their particular visions, opinions and attitudes with respect to their work. Still they do not debate like – for example – European politicians involved in a financial crisis. Heated debates, unrest, and turmoil are not common day events within our Society. Child psychiatrists and allied professions, clinicians and researchers meet quietly every two years and discuss their issues in a polite and peaceful manner.”

– *Are you suggesting the child and adolescent psychiatry network has fallen asleep?*
Hebebrand: “Within our specialty much is at stake too: we need to come up with the ways and means to alleviate the personal, familial and societal burdens caused by early onset mental disorders. As such, we ourselves but also our patients and their families may very well profit from a somewhat more intense discussion at the European level – we meet at the best venues so let us use them well to pursue our goals. Our discussion could use some continuity as well: a continuum after a common kick-off, instead of two years of silence between congresses.”

Founding of the Academy

– *So how do you intend to reintroduce a dynamic exchange of knowledge into youth psychiatry?*
“We perceive the urgent need to foster interactions between young clinicians and researchers in child and adolescent psychiatry at the European level. Based on meetings of a motivated group of young investigators, who are pursuing academic careers in child and adolescent psychiatry, and the ESCAP board we have recently re-founded the [ESCAP Research Academy](#) to fulfill this need.”

– *Idealism?*

“I won’t even try to seduce those young talents with idealism. Of course we are sworn doctors and we want to cure those children out there. But there is nothing wrong with building a steady career in child and adolescent psychiatry and learn the things you need to learn. Including grant writing, leadership, communication strategy and skills, and cleverly composing scientific publications. All of those things are also part of our profession. We will try to fill in the gaps. ESCAP – as an international society – and ECAP – as the ESCAP scientific journal – form an ideal foundation for getting things done with these wonderful young people. They are the future of child and adolescent psychiatry research.”

Goals of the Academy

– *What are the goals of the ESCAP Research Academy?*

“First of all, we wish to allow young researchers to come together on an annual basis to boost their academic careers. Second, such exchanges will enable the attendees to stay in contact, thus securing a cross-European exchange among clinicians and researchers who will hold prominent academic positions in the future. Third, such meetings will allow for motivating contacts with senior investigators. The short-term incentives for young investigators to join the Research Academy may be *developing their networks* with a large amount of international knowledge and insights in reach – both with senior experts and their peers in other European institutes –, *developing their leadership and communication skills* and the opportunity to develop their status as an *author of scientific publications* in the ECAP journal. The Research Academy intends to be a ‘super-academic’ breeding ground for youth psychiatry experts with a broad horizon.”

European approach

– *Back to the European vision: how do you intend to make use of the European knowledge-base that ESCAP claims to represent?*

“An underlying theme of the ESCAP Research Academy is to make use of European diversity to continuously challenge and thus improve our national approaches towards diagnosis and treatment of child and adolescent psychiatric disorders in a most productive manner. Furthermore, what research fields, what approaches are required to achieve this goal? What is out there to learn from our European neighbors, what can they learn from us? Each meeting of the ESCAP Research Academy will be devoted to one or two specific topics, for which we perceive the need and an interest in the attainment of a cross-national perspective. Initial examples include national comparisons of service provision and an overview of the formal training in child and adolescent psychiatry. As more and more groups of dedicated young investigators from all over Europe attend the ESCAP Research Academy, more difficult clinical and theoretical issues can be addressed including for instance European treatment guidelines for specific disorders or the future of genetic or imaging research in our discipline. Obviously, this requires an interaction with experienced researchers, who will act as coaches to foster this process.”

– *How should we perceive your role as the editor-in-chief of the ECAP Journal in relation to the ESCAP Research Academy?*

“My personal interest is to see to it that these cross-country comparisons are published as peer-reviewed articles in ECAP. We will need to discuss how the input of contributing young and senior colleagues can be made transparent to the readership of ECAP. I very much look forward to the very first meeting of the ESCAP Research Academy in Madrid. I think we are very much in line with the congress motto: ‘From research to clinical practice: linking the expertise’. And it seems that the Spanish cuisine is a lot better than average. Don’t be mistaken: I really enjoyed the northern *Mahlzeit* that our team prepared in Rees. But I certainly will appreciate my paella too.”

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[Read about the 2017 Geneva workshop](#) of the ESCAP Research Academy.

See Mudra et al, 2014 for the young investigators’ version of the *cooking and grant writing* event: Mudra S, Völker U, Schweren L, Wessing I, **Seitz J** (2015) [YICAP/ECAP international young investigators paper and grant writing workshop](#). Eur Child Adolesc Psychiatry 24(2):247-8