

Workshop 3

CONTACTS AND CONCEPTS: Getting the most out of the conference

BACKGROUND

Scientific conferences present participants with an ideal opportunity to initiate collaborations and develop worldwide networks. However new entrants to the subject, or those attending a conference for the first time, may find themselves with few or no contacts within established networks of research scientists.

Inexperienced participants may also find that the basic concepts and questions, which are the focus of conference presentations, are lost amongst the detail of full SVEPM presentations. Our experience has shown that there are also barriers to learning which may be as simple as an unknown word or unexplained method. This workshop is designed to overcome these problems and enable participants to get the most out the conference.

The variety of locations used by SVEPM and the limited travel budget of postgraduate students mean that the requirement for this workshop is potentially limitless. The maximum number catered for is 24 and the workshop has consistently attracted this number of participants.

OBJECTIVES

The aims of this workshop are:

1. To provide a pre-conference forum and environment that facilitates networking.
2. To unravel the apparent complexity of conference topics and to identify the underlying epidemiological concepts and questions and the approaches to answering them.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience is epidemiological research scientists and preventive medicine practitioners of the future. They may be young graduates/ post-graduate students, those attending SVEPM for the first time, or the only delegate from their institute at the meeting.

CONTENT

The workshop format is based on a successful structure used previously at SVEPM and ISVEE meetings, which has received enthusiastic positive feedback from participants.

The workshop will focus on core concepts of epidemiology and will use three topics (surveillance/ diagnostic tests, identification of risk factors from observational data and theoretical disease modelling) to highlight the problems, constraints and solutions to the design and analysis of epidemiological studies.

Prospective conference titles, which illustrate approaches taken to solving these problems, will be identified from the conference programme.

The workshop format will encourage networking. Previous workshops have shown that this is important in allowing inexperienced epidemiologists the opportunity to assist each other in understanding presentations and in facilitating their entry into new groupings within the conference.

Participants will also be given a glossary of terms which has been developed from previous conferences. *(We anticipate tailoring this glossary for SVEPM 2011 content if we can have access to papers before the conference, in time to define new terms and add them to the glossary, as we did previously).*

Participants will complete simple “barriers to learning” questionnaires throughout the conference. These have been pretested at previous meetings and are used to inform further workshops of this type.

WORKSHOP ORGANISERS

The workshop organisers will be Jackie Cardwell (Lecturer in Epidemiology, Royal Veterinary College) and Kenton Morgan (Professor of Epidemiology, University of Liverpool). The concept was developed when Jackie was a PhD student and this would be the third time this workshop has been held at SVEPM

RESOURCES REQUIRED

A room with tables and sufficient space for 3 groups to work independently. Flip chart. Overhead projector (OHP), acetates and pens. Projection screen.

FURTHER DETAILS

For further details please contact Jackie Cardwell jcardwell@rvc.ac.uk or Kenton Morgan k.l.morgan@liv.ac.uk