

## **Pre-conference Workshop**

### **Evaluating Meta Analyses: A Critical Consumers' Guide**

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This workshop will present basic principles for evaluating the credibility of the conclusions of a meta-analysis. Increasingly, researchers and evidence-oriented clinicians and policy makers are urged to rely on the results of meta-analyses for decision-making, rather than on individual intervention trials. Yet, recent criticisms of meta-analyses that have appeared in *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, *Health Psychology*, and even *JAMA* demonstrate that meta-analysis is hardly a straightforward, objective procedure, but one for which there is considerable room for subjective and arbitrary judgment. Overall, it is quite possible for two meta-analyses to differ greatly in their results and recommendations because of differences in search strategies, selection criteria, and choices made as to how to deal with the methodological limitations of the available trials. Thus, meta analyses can fall short, either because their failure to observe basic principles for how they should be conducted and reported, or because of how decisions that were made as to how to deal with the available trials. The latter decisions require a familiarity with the interventions being studied and the clinical context in which they will be implemented, or, as the presenter has termed it, a clinical connoisseurship. This workshop is most appropriate for three groups: (1) consumers of meta-analyses having to make informed research, clinical or policy decisions, (2) those who might be contemplating doing a critical re-analysis of a published meta-analysis, and (3) those who are conducting a meta-analysis of their own in which they would like to avoid likely problems and pitfalls. Discussion will center not only on how to interpret and do a meta-analysis, but also on how to publish one with adequate transparency. The workshop is nontechnical in the sense of not dwelling on statistical formulae, but will present a guide to some necessary summary statistics and their interpretation. Participants should come away being able to appreciate when results of a meta-analysis “ain’t necessarily so”. The presenter has published primary meta-analyses as well as critiques of published meta-analyses.

**Teaching strategies:** key articles will be pre-distributed to participants with expectation that participants will read them; didactic presentation with handouts; Power point presentations; Interactive sessions with the audience of specific published meta analyses.

This workshop would be suitable for graduate and PhD students, Postdoctoral Fellows, and Junior Faculty Preferred.

*Date:* September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010

*Time:* 9am – 12pm

*Fee:* 50 euro; reduced fee: 35 euro (for students and residents of one of the listed countries)