



Association NER21 (Neuro-Environmental Rehabilitation 21st century)
Plateforme d'échange professionnel, social, de formation et de recherche
Impasse Aurore 3 - 3960 Sierre / Suisse www.ner21.org ner21@bluemail.ch

Ordinary General Assembly, 11 April 2021, Geneva, Switzerland

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2019-2021

2019-2020 : Two years of our Association and what a disturbance of our lives since the advent of Covid-19! Of course, our lives were changed fundamentally – so much so that people may have lost close relatives or suffered repeated attacks of the virus. But let us start with a positive vision – that of everyone conforming to avoidance of physical contact without barriers indicated by evidence, and a re-evaluation of human relationships in terms of quality rather than quantity. How would we have coped with these frustrations if electronic communications such as Whatsapp, Skype, Facetime, Zoom, etc. did not exist? And what pleasure we shall have when we can once again take one another in our arms.

The post-Covid syndrome, often characterized by physical and biopsychosocial deconditioning with its diffuse neurological deficits, including hemiparetic and neuromuscular symptoms, fatigue and deterioration in the quality of life, may perhaps be tackled effectively using the NER21 concept. The chapter on biopsychosocial deconditioning in the book “Concept NER21” can provide useful ideas for those involved in treating persons who have suffered Covid-19. We hope that the results of studies on the outcome of treatment will show effectiveness.

Moving on to the principle themes which have been addressed in the past two years:

Activities of the Committee

The addition to the committee of Marie-Claire Morel, who has been Secretary since the 2019 AGM, has been an important support for the committee members but her competence, both professional and humane, has enriched our Association; a big thank-you to her!

Taking up once more all the activities presented in this report, the six members of the committee kept in regular consultation by either electronic means or physically. Using electronic means not only allowed us to meet less often physically, but also saved money!

NER21 Congress

The main activity over the past two years has obviously been the organisation and then re-organisation of the NER21 congress in association with ANFE (Association Nationale Française des Ergothérapeutes), initially planned for June 2020, then postponed to June 2021, and now planned for 10 June 2022, in Paris. This reorganisation necessitated, amongst other things, finding a new speaker in the person of Jean-Pierre Maes, a physiotherapist and instructor in M.A.E.S. Therapy, living in London and teaching internationally. His specialisation and experience in the treatment of children with CNS lesions will give added prestige to the congress and correlates very well with our concept.

New NER21 training structures

The ad hoc committee “Formation NER21”, comprising the three current NER21 senior instructors (Sheena Irwin-Carruthers, Susan Ryerson and myself) as well as Dre. Ursula K



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Imhof, agreed in 2019 to start a training structure. The objectives were to set the process of training as an instructor in motion and to structure the course of training and the seminars which will be recognised by NER21. The members of the college of experts were also consulted. The aim was to make the training structures accessible, taking into account the poor financial remuneration within the health sectors. The proposed training was to be in the form of three seminars, each of 5 days' duration. There were three levels of training: completion of the 1st level allows access to the 2nd level, and completion of the second level allows access to the 3rd. It is possible to progress through the levels within the same year, or over several years.

The first three seminars were held in Paris, France and in Lausanne/ Switzerland. The significant number of registrations received showed the interest of our physiotherapy and occupational colleagues. These three seminars were organised by the “Association Nationale Française des Ergothérapeutes (ANFE)” and the procedure for validation in order to get the certificate recognised by NER21 was prepared by Michèle H Gerber (teaching all three courses), Dre. Ursula K Imhof and Florence Jeay (responsible at that time for continuing education at ANFE). The ad hoc committee “Formation NER21” and the members of the college of experts were also consulted for their advice and recommendations.

The NEW format offers more flexibility, prompted by the negative experience of several colleagues who did not receive any financial support for two of the three seminars, although the course description specified clearly that new themes were taught in the successive seminars. After reflecting on the evidence, we propose that from 2022 a basic course (comprising seminars 1 and 2) be completed first, followed by an advanced course (seminar 3) to be held after completion of the basic course. Your comments and suggestions are welcomed.

Instructor training in the NER21 concept

The aim is to perpetuate education in the NER21 concept by instructors who have undergone specific training and are recognised by the association. A structure has been set up initially for qualified physiotherapists and occupational therapists. Later, training processes will be set up for other health professionals (speech and language therapists as well as care therapists).

Virginie Duplay, a physiotherapist with the university hospitals of Lyon, France, working at the Henri Gabrielle Rehabilitation Hospital, started her training in 2019 and Jérôme Sciquot, occupational therapist, freelance in Fribourg, Switzerland in 2020, with Michele H. Gerber as senior instructor NER21. We encourage them to finalise their training as soon as possible and also to promote the concept in the years to come.

NER21 Scales

The NER21 scales of effort, satisfaction/wellbeing, pain and performance were developed by Marie Julien, a Canadian speech therapist, Dre Ursula K Imhof, a medical doctor, and Michèle H. Gerber, a physiotherapist. They are published in the book “Approche thérapeutique neuro-environnementale après une lésion cérébrale / concept NER21” in 2014 (ISBN 978-2-35327-186-3). We have received and granted several requests to use the scales



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in rehabilitation hospitals, a stroke unit and in private practice. They have been used by physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists and care workers and the feedback received on their use is very positive, especially for people with aphasia.

The recent publication of our expert-clinician Marie Julien in the revue Disability and Rehabilitation, with the title “Immediate effects of postural repositioning on maximum phonation duration tasks in seated individuals with acquired dysarthria: a pilot study”. Prior to speech therapy, the OT or PT would assess and optimize the positioning of the patient using the Bobath concept to achieve a corrected seated posture. The patients with dysarthria demonstrated improvements in maximum phonation time and respiratory capabilities (like thoracic expansion). The NER21 scales were preferred to Borg test. More information in the NL 16.

Collaboration with the « Sexualité et Handicap pluriels /SEHP » association

Collaboration between our two associations is important. Dr Hubert Vuagnat, recent past-president of the SEHP and a member of NER21, is currently active in discussions to establish NER21 training in Switzerland. The aim of the SEHP association is to promote the right of all persons with disability to choose their own sexuality and to exercise their choice. This is intrinsically part of our concept of NER.

Courses and seminars recognised by NER21

As more expert clinicians establish their competency in this approach, we need to ensure that all courses and seminars indicate clearly in their course advertisements that the course or seminar is recognised by the NER21 association. It is permissible to use the official logo on the course advertisement and on the certificate, but a small fee must be paid to the association. This is obligatory and is necessary to sustain the finances of the association. It should be regarded as a small contribution towards what the association has given to the members who are qualified to give courses and seminars.

To remind you – several courses on the NER21 approach have been presented in the form of less than 5 days. This may be recognised if the number of hours is clearly indicated.

However, it is not comparable to the 1-3 seminars as described above under instructor training.

To date, health professionals from France, Canada, the USA, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Ukraine, Brazil, Argentina and South Africa have received certificates of competency in NER21.

NER21 Brochure

A reminder that the third version of the brochure, published in 2016, allowed revision of the text as well as the welcoming of two new members of the college of experts. It is recommended that you distribute it during your training courses. It is available on the website: www.ner21.org

Members across the world

These include individual members (therapists, patients and their caregivers), rehabilitation hospitals and community organisations as well as lecturers in basic and postgraduate training in universities or colleges. The following countries are represented:



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Switzerland, France, Canada, the USA, South Africa, Brazil, Argentina, Togo, Ghana, Bénin, Luxembourg, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Portugal, New Zealand, and UK.

Expert Clinicians and senior instructors NER21

To date the **expert clinicians of NER21** are : Lynn Fearnhead, Anna Greenblatt, Michèle H. Gerber, Sheena Irwin-Carruthers. Marie Julien, Carole Lavallée, Mary Riley, Lynda Rondeau, Susan Ryerson and Nicole Sève-Ferrieu.

The **senior instructors of NER21** are: Michèle H. Gerber (Switzerland), Sheena Irwin-Carruthers (South Africa) and Susan Ryerson (USA).

Address, internet site and e-mail address:

Since 2015, the official address of the NER21 association is: Impasse Aurore 3, CH – 3960 Sierre / Valais / Suisse www.ner21.org and E-mail: ner21@bluemail.ch

Contact persons for each category of membership

Lucie Moisan (patients and their entourage), Marie Julien (speech and language therapists), Lynda Rondeau (physiotherapists), Anna Greenblatt (occupational therapists), Dre Ursula K. Imhof (medical doctors, hospitals and rehabilitation centres), Michèle H. Gerber (community associations and public relations).

Newsletters

The newsletters edited by Dre Ursula K. Imhof provide a much-appreciated connection between the members and the committee. They provide information about new developments as well as about members involved in research or with areas of special interest. Don't hesitate to distribute these, or to provide contributions. The interactive forum accessible on the members' site could be used more – think about this!

Thanks

An association needs an active and stimulating committee, which is an advantage which I receive as President. A very great thanks to my colleagues on the committee, being Marie-Claire Morel (Secretary), Nicole Piaget (Treasurer) and Ursula Imhof (Vice-President). The exchange of ideas and their work to realize the objectives and projects of the association are very precious. Thank you for the active engagement of so many of the members and for renewing your confidence in me.

Michèle H Gerber
President, NER21

Please note:

The President's report is now published in both French and English and is available on the website: www.ner21.org