

## “Nutrition and the Mind” Congress in the Netherlands



Congress in session (photo: Hans Roes, Ortho Institute)

Mental disorders? Don't forget the body. This was the message in four words of the congress, Nutrition and the Mind, which took place November 1 in Utrecht, Netherlands.

The well-attended congress (200 people) consisted of many psychiatrists and psychologists, who were not particularly familiar with the subject, but who obviously wanted to know more about the orthomolecular approach for mental disorders. To appeal to this group, the subtitle of the congress was “food supplements or psychotropic drugs.” The first presenter was Trudy Dehue, professor of science history and theory of psychology at the University of Groningen. Her task was to substantiate this subtitle. Earlier in the year her best-selling book *Depressie-epidemie (The Depression Epidemic)* was published. In her search as theoretical scientist for causes for the rapid increase of depression, she became aware of the influence of the pharmaceutical industry on the prescription behavior of psychiatrists and other MDs. Included in her presentation

was the change of the definition of depression in the course of time, depending on what was convenient for certain groups in several eras. In this way she put the connection of psychiatry and drug industry nowadays into perspective.

Also in the Netherlands, vitamin D is in the spotlight. Psychiatrist and professor Witte Hoogendijk performed one of the first studies on the relation between depression and vitamin D deficiency for Neurogenomics and Cognitive Research at the VU University Medical Center, Amsterdam. The outcome of his large population-based study was an association of depression status and severity with decreased serum 25(OH)D levels and increased serum PTH levels in older individuals. Though the outcomes gave a clear benefit from vitamin D in depressive persons, he was still reluctant to prescribe the vitamin. In his view, the data were too preliminary. For this, more research was needed, especially clinical trials. This was the inducement for a discussion about evidence-based medicine.

The functioning of the brain is, like all

life processes, dependent on the supply of proper nutrients. These are indispensable to an integrated approach of body and spirit. This orthomolecular concept was covered by psychiatrist dr. Bo Jonsson of the Karolinska Institute in Sweden, the Dutch



Trudy Dehue (photo: Hans Roes, Ortho Institute)

biochemist dr. John Kamsteeg and the Belgian neuropsychiatrist dr. Michael Maes. Jonsson gave a general review on the effects of nutrients on anxiety disturbances. Kamsteeg demonstrated that treatment of a serious disease like schizophrenia is much more than just prescribing medication. He discussed the application of the orthomolecular approach of schizophrenia as described by Harold Foster in his book *What Really Causes Schizophrenia*. Kamsteeg also stressed the importance of the role of the thyroid gland in mental disorders.

Maes discussed the psychological and neurological symptoms that may go along with the chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CVS). He opposed the view that this illness is just “in the head”, and explained the etiology of CFS by infection, leaky gut, oxidative stress and auto-immune reactions. He emphasized the role of nuclear factor kappa beta (NFkb), a biomarker for inflammation in the body. Elevated concentrations of NFkb is related to fatigue, irritability and depressed feelings. NFkb inhibitors can improve symptoms. He considers curcumin as one of the strongest NFkb inhibitors.

Maes also mentioned the stubbornness of the psychiatric/psychological circles in his country, referring to the fuss in Belgium around the so-called CVS Reference Cen-

ters, which, for years, offer the standard treatment, which is limited to cognitive behavioral therapy and graded exercise therapy. This was the reason for him to write an open letter to the Belgian Minister of Public Health just two days

before the congress. He stressed the importance of measuring biomarkers in order to treat these patients with specific immunotherapies and food supplements.

Annelies van Ommeren, orthomolecular MD/acupuncturist, gave an overview of nine psychiatric cases in her practice with mental disorders. She presented a Moroccan man with depressive symptoms who drank much very sweet tea on a daily basis. After this cultural tea use was removed from his daily habits—along with all the sugar and lactose—and was prescribed supplements (probiotics, oregano, zinc and B vitamins to strengthen the immune system) he recovered almost instantly. With the pleasant side effect: his intestinal complaints and fatigue disappeared.

Perhaps the gap between the orthomolecular and mainstream medicine is probably most illustrative when listening to the reactions in the corridors. In a reaction to the presentation of the cases by van Ommering, an experienced orthomolecular doctor said he had heard little new. On the other hand, a conventional psychotherapist shook his head in despair, acknowledged his need to move beyond his own ideas, but did not know where to begin.

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## Upcoming Conferences

# OHM Orthomolecular Health Medicine

15<sup>th</sup> Annual Scientific Meeting

*Orthomolecular Therapies That Work*

**February 27 - March 1, 2009**

**Cathedral Hill Hotel, San Francisco, CA**

Program, Schedule and Registration contact:

**OHM Society**

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## Diet and Optimum Health Conference

**May 13-16, 2009**

**Portland, Oregon**

**Hilton Portland & Executive Tower**

Diet and Optimum Health 2009 will emphasize dietary and lifestyle approaches to improving human health and preventing or treating disease, including dietary supplements, micronutrients, and antioxidants. The target audience includes scientists and health professionals in biochemistry, nutrition, preventive medicine, public health, endocrinology, cardiology, oncology, and gerontology. We anticipate a strong scientific look at the cutting edge of nutrition research. The program features individual sessions including:

- Healthy Aging: Neurocognitive Disorders and Molecular Mechanisms
- Micronutrients and Immune Function
- Vitamin K: New Functions and Biological Mechanisms
- Diet and Lifestyle in Metabolic Syndrome and Cardiovascular Diseases
- Epigenetics, Diet, and Disease

Registration begins in January 2009.

Please contact the Linus Pauling Institute at 541-737-5075  
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