



Letter from the Editor	p.01
Letter from the President	p.03
Letter from the Editor in Chief of IJBM	p.06
ICBM Glasgow 2020/21 – A view from the LOC and SPC	p.09
News from the E&T Committee	p.12
ISBM selects its first professional management company	p.14
Luminaries in behavioural medicine – Andrew Steptoe	p.17
A behavioural medicine approach to... COVID-19	p.20
In memoriam: Kristina Orth-Gomér	p.24
Board Members	p.25

Letter from the Editor

Dear ISBM Members,

Please allow me to briefly introduce myself: As of Spring this year, I was approved by the Board to take over the newsletter from Luke Wolfenden until the next elections. I am extremely honoured and happy to find myself in this role, and would like to express my gratitude to the Board for trusting me with this important task and to Luke for leaving the newsletter in such great shape.

The last few months have witnessed difficult times. It is with great sadness that the society learned of the passing of Kristina Orth-Gomér, who has been a key figure within ISBM since its founding. Please find the society's obituary on Kristina on page 24. I would also like to draw your attention to a portrait of Kristina that was published in the Encyclopedia of Behavioral Medicine (https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-1-4419-1005-9_333), which beautifully illustrates her important contributions to behavioural medicine.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken its toll on societies worldwide. I highly recommend reading the President's and the Editor in Chief's Letter to learn more about the challenges the ISBM and the IJBM have been facing. One of the most immediate consequences of COVID-19 was the postponement of the ICBM in Glasgow to next year. Find out more about all the efforts that were undertaken by the Local Organising Committee and the Strategic Planning Committee in response to this challenge on page 9! Luckily, our E&T committee has remained active during this time and is now asking for active contributions to some of their planned activities. Please go to page 12 for more information. Another major change for the society was the successful selection of a professional management company. Read all about the fascinating story that led up to this historic event on page 14!



As you will notice, this issue of the newsletter contains two additional features, which I hope will be of interest to you. The first feature is part of a planned series of short interviews with luminaries in behavioural medicine. I am very excited that the person I was able to interview for this issue was Professor [Andrew Steptoe](#), a former President of our society and of the most distinguished scientists in our field. Find out why he is envious of his younger colleagues on page 17!

The second feature is a new section where I am planning to collect comments from our Member Societies on current hot topics. This time, I was asking researchers from the UK, Sweden, the US, Portugal, Singapore, and Japan how each of them experienced COVID-19. It was fascinating for me to learn about the many different approaches that behavioural medicine as a discipline has taken to this issue. If you are keen on learning more about this, go to page 20 to read the answers given by [Annie Anderson](#), [Anne H. Berman](#), [Elissa Epel](#), [Maria João Figueiras](#), [Konstadina Griva](#), and [Akihito Shimazu](#).

I hope that you like this issue of the newsletter and would like to invite you all to please contact me if you have any suggestions for improvement or if you would like to make a contribution to the next issue. I will be delighted to work with you on any ideas you might have!

In the meantime, I wish you all a happy and safe autumn!

Susanne Fischer
Editor of the ISBM Newsletter





Letter from the President

Dear friends and colleagues,

I trust this message finds you well and healthy. 2020 has been a tremendous challenge for all of us, all over the world, as our personal and professional lives were affected in a previously unprecedented manner. ISBM also faced and continues to face a number of challenges. In my letter, I will describe some of these challenges. Obviously, all of us involved with ISBM have so many other tasks and duties; I could not be happier about your continued interest and involvement with ISBM, and I am deeply indebted to all of you for taking precious time out of your busy personal and professional schedules to serve ISBM.

In one of my recent letters, I reported to you about our face-to-face retreat in Vienna. It is difficult to grasp how easily we were able to travel around the world and meet in person. This was supposed to be the starting point of a number of follow-up retreats to discuss strategic matters. While a lot of things can be discussed in a virtual space very well, an intensive exchange about strategic matters is difficult to accomplish via Zoom. Our idea to meet in 2020 was unfortunately curbed by the ongoing Covid-19 situation. We, thus, have to table this for the time being and hope that in 2021 we will have another opportunity to meet face-to-face. Anne Berman, our President-elect, already invited us to come visit her in Stockholm, so I really hope that we will be able to take her up on this invitation!

“It is difficult to accept that the ICBM did not come to pass in real life, but I can feel the energy of everybody involved wanting to make the best virtual ICBM possible”

As I am writing this, our ICBM planned for August 2020 would have just been in its final stages. Probably after a long week, with pre-conference meetings of the Board and the Governing Council, exciting scientific content and numerous interactions with friends and colleagues, I would have been quite exhausted, but most likely quite happy. It is difficult to accept that none of this came to pass (well, I could do without the exhaustion part) and that, in fact, a lot of this will not happen in our upcoming ICBM, given the restraints that are inherent to a virtual meeting. I have never doubted that postponing the conference to 2021 and that deciding to make it a fully virtual conference was the right thing to do – but it's still going together with some lingering feeling of sadness. However, I can also feel the



energy in our hard-working SPC and LOC, with everybody involved wanting to make this the best virtual ICBM that it can be! There are so many opportunities that an onsite ICBM could not offer: let's think, e.g., about the difficult decision each of us has to make on a regular basis what session to attend when there are 8 parallel symposia! Now, for the first time, there is no such decision to make, since online content will be accessible at a later point, so technically I could attend all 8 parallel sessions (which would be, I admit, mind blowing). So, after a few moments of reflection on things that cannot be changed, I am truly enthusiastic about the prospects of meeting all of you at the virtual ICBM in 2021. Of course, postponing our meeting also means that we had to make a decision about the ICBM after that. Initially planned to take place in Vancouver (although no official decision has been made yet), we decided that it would not make sense to have two congresses in subsequent years, so it would probably be best to have the next ICBM in 2023 (maybe in Vancouver, but we simply are not there yet).

Since traditionally we were always holding elections at previous ICBMs, and since terms of about half of the Board are expiring in November 2020, we will have to ask the Governing Council to extend the terms until the upcoming ICBM. This is not because we want to remain longer in a position of power, but we all agreed that it would be difficult to exchange half of the Board in the current situation and just half a year prior to the ICBM. So, for the sake of consistency and continuity, we hope that the GC will allow us to serve a little bit longer than the bylaws officially allow.

Sadly, we had to say goodbye to one of ISBM's founding members and former President, Kristina Orth-Gomer. She had such an important impact on the field of behavioral medicine, so she will be greatly missed, as both a great friend and colleague. When I was Newsletter Editor (many years ago), I was so happy about her allowing me to interview her for the August 2009 issue. She was very gracious with her time and even provided me with pictures from when she was earlier in her career. Please be sure to check out the interview, which is available here (<https://www.isbm.info/isbm-activities/isbm-newsletter/newsletter-archive/>), it's so full of heart and wisdom! She is sorely missed and our hearts are with her friends and family.

“After many years of hard work, we
have finally found a professional man-
agement company that suits our
needs”

I also want to share a couple of great news with you, so it's not all doom and gloom. As you know, we had a couple of Board members who wanted to step off their position due to a number of various reasons. We were very lucky to find more than suitable replacements, and all of them have already been approved both by the Board and the GC. So,



let me welcome our new Membership Committee Chair, Lara Traeger, Newsletter Editor, Susanne Fischer, and Treasurer, Beate Ditzen. You all know these new additions: Lara has done such a tremendous job as Program Chair of our ICBM in Chile, Sue has been interacting with many of you during her time as Executive Assistant (when I was Communications Committee Chair), and Beate has previously served as Newsletter Editor!

The other great news is that, after many years of hard work, we have finally managed to find a professional management company that suits our needs. With ICS, we found a great partner. Initially, we will collaborate for a bit less than a year to see whether both ISBM and ICS are on the same page with what we want from each other. We do hope that this is going to be the start of a long-term relationship, though. I cannot thank enough all of my colleagues who have been involved in the process. I think it started with Adrienne Stauder, when she was President, and after her, Frank Penedo took over. It feels awkward that this process is now completed under my Presidency, when Adrienne and Frank have done most of the work. I also want to acknowledge the major role of our Finance Committee Chair, Sherri Sheinfeld Gorin, who has worked tirelessly on finding a suitable company. We owe her as well as Adrienne and Frank such a big thank you! Please make sure to read Sherri's account of the process, and what the benefits of a professional management company are, in her contribution in this newsletter issue.

Finally, I am very happy that our most recent endeavor on defining behavioral medicine as a discipline has been so successful that we are now holding a published paper in our hands (you may download it here, published in our society's journal: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12529-020-09928-y>). Under the leadership of former President and Member-at-Large Joost Dekker, all member societies were invited to contribute to this process, and after several iterative steps, the group of contributors have come up with a succinct definition of behavioral medicine as well as identifying the most urgent needs in both our discipline in general and ISBM specifically. The recommendations that are outlined in the final paper will have repercussions for the years to come, and will provide the basis for many discussions in the near future.

With these positive notes, I want thank you all for your continued interest in and service for ISBM. I am very much looking forward to interacting with you using whatever technical means we have at our disposal.

All the best wishes, please stay healthy,



Urs M. Nater
President of the ISBM



Letter from the Editor in Chief of IJBM

Dear ISBM Members,

This year has shown us the incredible impact that health behavior can have on our individual, community, and global health. I am so proud to be part of the field of Behavioral Medicine at this critical time and I am continually inspired by the ways in which our professional community has met the challenges of a global pandemic. Being a part of the International Journal of Behavioral Medicine (IJBM) gives me the great gift of interacting with behavioral medicine researchers and scholars from every corner of the globe. It is clear to me that we face so many similar health challenges and this pandemic shines a light on how we all are connected in terms of our health and in our shared pursuit of evidence-based solutions.

It calls to question how COVID-19 has affected IJBM. Time will help us fully answer this question, but I can make several observations. First, this pandemic has not slowed the publishing pipeline. In fact, IJBM continues to see an increase in the number of submissions. Last year was a record year in this regard and so far 2020 is on trend to surpass last year's numbers. At the same time, the response to the pandemic has slowed research, closed labs, and limited the recruitment of research participants. This will undoubtedly have impact in the year to come.

“This pandemic has not slowed the publishing pipeline. In fact, IJBM continues to see an increase in the number of submissions”

Another observation is that behavioral medicine researchers have sprung into swift action to use the tools of scientific inquiry to contribute to knowledge. We have given high priority to these submissions in an effort to provide rapid review. At the same time, good science is hard to do. We have balanced the urgent need for knowledge at this time, with the imperative of maintaining our highest scientific standards and peer review.

It is an important, albeit early, observation to say that this period will not be without impact. At this time when so many of us have found ourselves working from home, we come to know varied experiences ranging from those who have more time to write and publish to those who must devote more time to child care. Journal editors from a variety of fields are beginning to notice a troubling pattern suggesting that the pandemic has had a disproportionate negative impact on female authors, particularly in way of solo-authored submissions. In conversation with fellow editors of behavioral medicine journals,



we will be monitoring this trend in the coming months. It is likely to prove to be a unique opportunity to better understand the gendered impact of this crisis.

This year has also brought the release of the IJBM Special Issue on Salivary Bioscience in Behavioral Medicine. This special issue illustrates the innovative use of salivary bioscience to answer important behavioral medicine questions. The interdisciplinary nature of behavioral medicine has expanded and so has its basic scientific and clinical practice missions. Its distinguished history in understanding behavioral influences on the onset, prevention, and management of disease and on the promotion of well-being and health points the way toward a future of continued innovation and discovery. The issue overviews of the use of salivary measures in behavioral medicine; includes six original scientific studies; and two reviews pointing to the utility of estradiol and alpha-amylase, and guidance on the physiometrics of salivary data.



Special issue on **Salivary Bioscience**, edited by Michael A. Hoyt and Douglas Granger:

<https://link.springer.com/journal/12529/27/3>

Latest publication from the **Statistical Guideline Series**, led by Suzanne Segerstrom:

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12529-020-09868-7>

Be on the lookout for the special issue on Translational Sleep Science later this year or early 2021. IJBM has collaborated with the Sleep Special Interest Group of the Society of Behavioral Medicine in the USA. The focus is on empirical studies of sleep science in behavioral medicine across the translational spectrum. We received a particularly large response to this call and are eager to release the issue!

Finally, I want to take the opportunity to highlight our special Statistical Guideline Series led by our Statistical Editor, Suzanne Segerstrom. Over the past year, a brief guideline paper has appeared in each issue of IJBM that highlights common statistical considerations in behavioral medicine research. The papers offer guidance and discussion of both basic and advanced statistical choices and will collectively culminate in a set of basic statistical guidelines to be adopted by IJBM. Recent guidelines have been published on



the use of categorical variables versus continuous variables, reporting appropriate sample reliability, designating statistical covariates, handling missing data, and power analyses.

It seems one thing we have all accepted these days is that a return to “normal” will not be “normal.” With extraordinary changes in each aspect of our lives we would be unwise to think “normal” aspects of scholarship will return. We will learn which changes will be for the better and which will surely not. IJBM’s challenge will be to discover out how to guide us towards the good changes ahead.

Michael A. Hoyt
Editor in Chief
International Journal of Behavioral Medicine





ICBM Glasgow 2020/21 – A view from the LOC and SPC

Dear Sharon, dear Olga, dear Judith, thank you so much for taking the time to speak to us about the postponing of ICBM, which was originally to take place in Glasgow this August. First, may I ask, at what point did you learn that the ICBM will need to be postponed?

When the World Health Organization's declared COVID-19 a global pandemic in March, we have been monitoring the situation carefully. We decided to postpone the 16th International Congress of Behavioural Medicine planned for the 19th - 22nd August 2020 to mid 2021. Initially we had hoped to run a face to face congress in 2021 and to welcome people from all corners of the world to our city of Glasgow and beautiful country of Scotland. However, the SPC members in the Australasian regions noticed that it will remain challenging to come to Europe over the entire next year. The one problem will be that it is unpredictable how long the border controls and the two-week quarantine will be maintained. The other problem is that many universities in the Australasian area have run into financial problems because they are dependent on international students. It has been announced in many places that international conference travel will be highly restricted or even impossible over the entire next year. The ongoing uncertainty of what will happen with COVID-19 has meant that we have made the difficult decision to make the congress fully online.



Professor Judith Prins
Chair of the Strategic
Planning
Committee



Professor Sharon Simpson
Chair of the Local
Organising
Committee



Olga Utkina-MacAskill
Conference Secretary



So apart from having to move the ICBM to the next year, there was also a change in the congress format. What were the main challenges you were or are still facing in this situation?

Less than a month before COVID-19, we had completed a huge amount of work in preparation for the 2020 congress including finalising the programme, venues etc. We were very excited about welcoming delegates to Glasgow but in light of the on-going uncertainty with COVID-19, ICBM 2021 will be a fully online, virtual experience that will take place the week of June 7th-11th 2021. We believe this is the safest approach for the health of our global audience and we are excited that a virtual event makes it possible to broaden the learning opportunities and engagement with the wider scientific community at this time. This online approach may well be the future of conferences around the globe given concerns about environmental impacts. We will be treading very new ground and I anticipate many challenges but there will be room for innovation and leadership from ISBM in this space.

**“The ongoing uncertainty of what
will happen with COVID-19 has led
us to the decision to make ICBM
2021 fully online”**

Given that none of us have organised an online congress I anticipate many challenges: How to replicate the conference experience where impromptu meetings and other social get-togethers are really important in terms of networking; how to keep engagement levels high and ensure that delegates don't get 'online congress fatigue'; getting the technology in place to support the congress; how to deal with time differences in countries across the world; how to deal with mentoring sessions for early careers and young society members and how to ensure feedback of senior authors on early-career presentations. As this will be the very first time when ICBM will be run online, we recognise that we are breaking new ground and that there will be lots of learning along the way.

It is clear that you have already put a tremendous amount of thought and effort into the planning of this conference. Can you tell us a little bit more about what attendees can expect from the ICBM 2021?



We recognise the challenges of running an online congress and treat them very seriously. However this medium also offers a number of benefits, including: a virtual congress means more attendees than ever before can participate; with on-demand and recorded sessions, delegates will be able to revisit sessions and there will be no need to pick between competing sessions; the congress environmental footprint will be very low and; and presenters science can still have maximum reach and impact.

“A virtual congress means that more attendees than ever before can participate and we have some excellent keynotes and master lectures”

Committing to a virtual congress now allows us ample time to plan an amazing virtual conference. Moving forward we'll focus all of our efforts on making our event in 2021 an excellent experience with many innovations. Many of the features of our face to face congress will remain including opportunities to network, our early career network events and awards, and bursaries available for attendance of those from lower or middle income countries. We are optimistic the event will be a success for our delegates, and the wider scientific community. We recognise that in the case of virtual events, content is truly king and we have some excellent keynotes and master lectures as well as a fantastic programme of speakers. We hope to 'see' you all there in 2021!

Please check out the ICBM website for up-to-date information on the conference:

www.icbm-congress.com





News from the Education and Training Committee

Dear Colleagues,

I hope that this newsletter will find you in good health and safety with respect to the on-going pandemic. By this time the Education and Training Committee (E&T Committee) would have been busy preparing for some exciting activities scheduled for the ICBM congress in Glasgow. The activities included a workshop and a focused symposium that had to be postponed as a consequence of the pandemic, but why wait until 2021 to launch new activities? Below you will find some ideas ready to be realized with kind help and engagement from interested ISBM members.

One of the most prominent strategic goals for ISBM during the next years is to increase education and training activities. The overall goal is to provide an international platform for knowledge exchange, dissemination, and collaboration in education and training within the interdisciplinary and international field of behavioural medicine. The E&T Committee has several ideas on activities serving this purpose. A taste of ideas includes increased activities and news exchange on social media platforms, research and literature coverage including selected reviews and dissemination to interested members, a webinar series, a future digital knowledge bank on E&T tools and strategies used worldwide in higher education and continuing education. We planned for a breakfast meeting and round table discussion in Glasgow to collect further ideas on activities, but most important, on how to implement them and how to reach out worldwide. We will adjourn this meeting to the next congress, but are eager to take some more steps during the upcoming year.

To succeed with these ambitions, the E&T Committee welcome new members to the committee. We invite colleagues from different disciplines, experiences (from students to distinguished professionals), and from countries all over the world. There is room for many of you!

Do you have an interest in E&T and are willing to contribute?

Do not hesitate to contact me for more information!

pernilla.asenlof@neuro.uu.se

Subject: ISBM E&T Committee



Another urgent issue for success and dissemination is to find a way to reach colleagues worldwide interested in behavioural medicine E&T knowledge exchange. Please forward this newsletter to whom it may be interesting and sign up for our new mailing list!

Do you want to be informed about future E&T activities?

If so, please e-mail your name, country, discipline/profession, and e-mail address to:

pernilla.asenlof@neuro.uu.se

Subject: ISBM E&T mailing list

Once the mailing list is up and running you will get an e-mail where you are asked to confirm that you accept being on the list.

Finally, we are in the height of the summer in Sweden, and the situation is not that bad as have been reported in media. We have seen a tremendous and instant human behaviour change driven by the Covid-19 threat and a combination of reliance on, and responsibility taken, by the Swedish people. Currently we are facing the challenges of maintenance, as most health behaviour change interventions do. The pandemic has changed our way of living, our priorities and expectations. It has also shown how important and topical knowledge on behavioural medicine is, now and in the future.

Welcome to join me in the work with worldwide knowledge exchange and dissemination of E&T strategies in behavioural medicine!



Pernilla Åsenlöf
Chair of the ISBM Education and Training Committee



ISBM selects its first professional management company



Sherri Sheinfeld Gorin
Chair of the Finance Committee

On August 21, 2020, Urs Nater, our ISBM President, signed a one-year contract with the first professional management company that the organization has ever employed, International Conference Services (ICS; <https://www.icsevents.com/about-ics/>). Based in Vancouver, with locations world-wide, ICS has a long history of working effectively with professional organizations such as ISBM. The professional management organization will assist us with the financial management of the organization, including budgeting, banking, accounting, and dues collection. They were selected because of their: excellence (according to several referees); perceived interest in a productive relationship with ISBM; familiarity with US requirements for non-profit organizations; their cost, and their capacity to work with us to more effectively manage ISBM. As Urs has noted in his letter, we will also have the chance to evaluate them even before the year is through, so they are poised to continue to be responsive to us.

Professional management companies, like ICS, are ubiquitous in professional organizations like ISBM; our largest member society, SBM, has employed them for years. With their focus on financial management, they will help us to focus on meeting our ISBM mission more efficiently. ICS is expected to help our volunteer leaders to effectively carry out their tasks for the organization, as well as provide us a permanent ISBM address. And, with our pending non-profit legal status (more on that in a subsequent newsletter article), ICS will assist us to file the required yearly tax reports.

We selected them after an extensive, multi-year search for, and vetting of, several professional management companies. The lengthy history that preceded contract approval by our Governing Board, is highlighted in brief below.



Several years ago, under President Adrienne Stauder, we had signed a contract with a professional management company that was based in Germany. Unfortunately, the legal incorporation that was required by the management organization was ultimately not tenable in Germany, so we had to break that management contract. Under Frank Penedo's presidential leadership, we incorporated in the US. While seeking legal non-profit status in the US (common for more favorable tax treatment), we began the search for another professional association management company.

Led by our Finance Committee (Sherri Sheinfeld Gorin, Chair; Anne Berman, Joost Dekker, Bernd Leplow, Barbara Mullen, Urs Nater, Frank Penedo, Deborah Weiss), from January, 2019 through the fall, 2019, we interviewed four professional management organizations that had been referred to us, had contacted us, or that we had located through an internet search. Each provided us with their proposals for ISBM financial and conference management services. As we were already considering another organization for the proposed 2020 conference, (that we also vetted), we chose to focus only on financial management, although all organizations could provide both services.

At a comprehensive teleconference of the Finance Committee on October 4, 2019, we systematically compared each of the organizations to professionally manage ISBM according to pre-determined criteria. The criteria included: a US base (for our non-profit tax status); non-US offices for our international group; size; cost; whether website services could be provided (all organizations charged an additional fee); recommendations from references, and from the Finance Committee's interviews of them. Each of our Finance Committee members was asked to name a first and second choice. I worked with Frank Penedo to followup on the choices, in order, to secure a contract with ISBM.

Subsequent to our meeting, however, in the fall of 2019, business conditions had changed for two of the four organizations. As we contacted each organization, in rank order, to develop a contract with ISBM, two of the organizations proposed vastly different (and unfavorable) financial arrangements with us. ICS, by contrast, was enthusiastic about negotiating a contract with us, and retained their original fee structure.

Despite the global proliferation of the COVID-19 pandemic at the end of 2019 and in early 2020, we continued our negotiations with ICS. During the spring and summer, I continued to discuss our progress with the Finance Committee; I shared our findings with the Executive Committee. Over the summer, we received a contract from ICS that we subsequently thoroughly reviewed with both our ISBM lawyer, and our Executive Committee. The Executive Committee made some additional changes that were incorporated in the final contract. Urs Nater, with Maria Kleinstaeuber, brought the final contract to our Governing Council for discussion and approval. It was approved!



After a multi-year effort—across three ISBM Presidents--we are looking forward to a productive working relationship with ICS. Thank you—particularly our Finance Committee members--for your contributions and your patience. Send up the congratulatory balloons for ISBM!



Photo from forbes.com



Luminaries in behavioural medicine – Andrew Steptoe

This series will be dedicated to researchers who have made outstanding contributions to the field of behavioural medicine. It is a great honour that the first interviewee of this series is Professor Andrew Steptoe of University College London, who is one of the most cited researchers in Health Psychology worldwide, with over 865 scientific articles and book chapters published to date.

Dear Professor Steptoe, thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed for the ISBM Newsletter. May I start out with asking what has initially drawn you to the emerging field of behavioural medicine?

I became fascinated by the mind-body problem as an undergraduate in Cambridge, and briefly toyed with philosophy rather than science as a career. Then I graduated around the time that biofeedback was in vogue, and promised to deepen our understanding of how mental processes might control bodily functions. Although that hope was not fulfilled, it stimulated my interest in how emotions and behaviour relate to physical function and physical health. Later on, I learned more about the profound impact that social and economic inequalities have on health and wellbeing. These continue to be important themes for me.





Among the many seminal contributions to the field that you have made since this day, which ones do you personally regard as most important?

That's difficult to say. The longer one is involved in research, the clearer it becomes that few individuals make personal seminal contributions, because so much emerges through collective activities. But some of the work I am most proud of has tried to link basic biobehavioural processes with the population perspective on social disparities in health, illness, and aging. In recent years, I have become much more involved in understanding the role of positive wellbeing and purpose in life with health outcomes. However, in terms of importance, I guess I would place highly my efforts to maintain the population cohort I direct, the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing or ELSA. We have been able to obtain research funds for this study since 2002, but doing this is immensely time consuming. We keep this study going as a resource for the scientific community, and researchers from round the world can use it free of charge. I strongly believe that longitudinal studies like ELSA provide a fundamental platform for behavioural medicine research. But maintaining research infrastructures like this is challenging.

"You need determination to stick to your objectives, but pragmatism is also needed to mould your activities to the possibilities that are available"

You have mentioned that your own research interests have changed over the years. What would you say, how has the field behavioural medicine in general evolved since the beginning of your career?

A key change that I have witnessed over my career is the addition of population level research to the individually-based laboratory and clinical work that was the mainstay of behavioural medicine when it started. But there have been other huge developments that have enriched the field: the explosion in genetic knowledge, the maturation of brain imaging, psychoneuroimmunology, the value of complex interventions, causal inference methodology – the list goes on.



Given the increasing complexity of the field, what do you consider the “ingredients” of a meaningful career in behavioural medicine?

This is a very exciting time to be involved in behavioural medicine, and I’m envious of my younger colleagues and the many opportunities they have for getting involved in different types of research. Everyone’s career has a different trajectory, but my one piece of advice would be to couple determination with pragmatism. You need determination to stick to your objectives even when you face rebuffs. I can tell you that it does not get any easier; however senior you are, you still get papers rejected by journals and grants turned down. Pragmatism is needed to mould your activities to the possibilities that are available. There may be a call for grant applications (or RFA in the USA) that’s not quite on what you want to do, or a job advertised that has a slightly different focus from what you had planned. It may still be worth going for these opportunities, and they might lead you in new and interesting directions.

Thank you so much for taking the time for this interview, and for your insightful and inspirational answers!

Andrew Steptoe, MA, DPhil, DSc, FBPSS, FRSB, FMedSci, is the Head of the Department of Behavioural Science and Health and Professor of Psychology and Epidemiology at University College London. He is the Director of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA), one of the largest and most successful ongoing epidemiological studies in behavioural medicine worldwide. Professor Steptoe has been the Editor in Chief of the British Journal of Health Psychology and an Associate Editor of the Journal of Psychosomatic Research and of Annals of Behavioral Medicine. He was the third President of the ISBM (1994-1996) and has served on the Editorial Board of the IJBM from 1996 to 2004.



A behavioural medicine approach to... COVID-19

This section will be dedicated to issues of global importance, and will try and outline how they can be dealt with from a behavioural medicine point of view. To this end, ISBM Member Societies from around the world will be asked to comment on a specific topic. This time, our Member Societies were asked about ongoing efforts in their countries to tackle the international COVID-19 pandemic. Here are their most intriguing answers:



Professor Annie Anderson

President of the UK Society for Behavioural Medicine

“As in so many countries, whilst there is some concern that COVID-19 will have an impact on research careers in the longer term in the UK, many behavioural scientists have come to the fore in the current climate as government advisors, critics and leaders of new research. Behind our research efforts and outputs, there is also the need to recognise the importance of personal well-being and supporting each other. Led by our Early Career Research network (alongside the International Society for Behaviour Nutrition and Physical Activity - ISBNPA) we have launched a series of webinars on how to manage work and the rest of life during this period. Our mentoring support programme will be available within the next few months, with special considerations given to our early and mid-career members and the uncertainties’ ahead. Staying networked is our priority using a range of alternative approaches, new modes of communication and great plans for a different sort of conference offering in 2021.”



Associate Professor Anne H. Berman

President of the Swedish Society of
Behavioral Medicine

President-Elect of ISBM



“Sweden has taken a unique position in managing COVID-19 by recommending behaviors consistent with minimizing contagion, rather than enforcing a societal lockdown or prioritizing widespread testing. Ongoing research within the field of behavioral medicine includes university students’ attitudes and experiences of the mental and educational effects of the pandemic, gambling behavior as affected by the pandemic (increase or decrease?), the sense of smell as affected by the virus and psychological effects of the pandemic among the general population. Speaking for my own research on university students, our plan is to report back to the universities regarding students’ mental health and wellbeing, currently and over the next months, and to include the students’ suggestions for improved management of the pandemic as well as their subjective experiences of adapting to the educational and societal changes resulting from it.”



Professor Elissa Epel

President of the Academy of Behavioral Medicine
Research

“As all can see from the news, the US government has had a chaotic and uncoordinated response, motivated by politics, which created recurring risk, economic devastation, and emotional stress, varying in intensity by city and state. This is a particularly hard year for our researchers with young children at home, and fortunately there are many initial actions for better gender equity and social justice in academia. Many of our members have jumped into ongoing studies or starting new studies, to collect pandemic related data,



such as the impact of media exposure, social distancing and infection stress on mental health, as well as characterizing infection risk factors. Our annual meeting in 2021 will add a new focus on the role of behavioral medicine in global challenges such as pandemics. At the University of California, San Francisco, we have developed resources for continuum of care, from the normative anxiety to clinical distress. I have worked with our psychiatry department and experts in disaster mental health to develop resources for management of acute stress and building institutional stress resilience for clinicians, both hospitalists and mental health providers. We have experts on trauma and adaptation on our webinar (<https://psychiatry.ucsf.edu/coronavirus/webinars>), short videos (<https://psychiatry.ucsf.edu/coronavirus/videos>), and a website with curated self-help resources such as apps (<https://psychiatry.ucsf.edu/coronavirus>). Please feel free to share these with your institutions and especially high stress essential workers.”

Associate Professor Maria João Figueiras
President of the Portuguese Society of Health and Behaviour



“Portugal has gradually restarted the economy and activities. Due to COVID-19 there have been a lot of initiatives from many areas of health focused on research about the impact of this pandemic in several aspects of life and behavior, including the psychological impact of the lockdown measures and curfew, ranging from the anxiety and depression levels, changes in habits and behaviours, changes in work and family life, financial consequences and impact on health and quality of life in several groups of the general population, stress on health professionals, illness related perceptions, risk perception and protective behaviours, to health and well-being during this pandemic. Many universities and other institutions are involved in developing research to understand how the population is facing this challenge in several areas of life, and to inform future interventions for promoting preventive behaviours, and health and safety for specific risk groups and the general population.”



Associate Professor Konstadina Griva
President of the Society of Behavioural Health
Singapore



“COVID 19 has affected the lives of our global community and invariably those of our members. In these extraordinary times, where behavior change epitomizes the measure taken to contain the pandemic, our society chose not to stay sidelined but actively connect with our community. Our inaugural newsletter “living and working in COVID 19 in Singapore” featured interviews with frontline health care workers and members of our society. With the support of TOTE Board community Healthcare Fund and the Health Promotion Board Singapore, the society has organized a series of public webinars on epidemiological and behavioural understandings related to COVID-19. We are now pleased to announce the 2020 e-Scientific Day of the Society of Behavioural Health Singapore in November 2020. We are currently working towards putting together an exciting program to showcase the theoretical and empirical contributions of behavioural medicine in the pandemic and the research in Singapore and our region on COVID 19.”



Professor Akihito Shimazu
Past President of the Japanese Society of Behavioral
Medicine

“Our society launched the website page that provides COVID-19 related-information from government, academic societies, universities, and journals in Japanese (<https://plaza.umin.ac.jp/jsbm/tomem/news20200515.html>). The society also delivered a Newsletter that introduces activities of society members. Members of the society 1) opened a special website on sleep (<https://www.edogawa-u.ac.jp/facility/sleep/sleeptips.html>), 2) published a paper on psychosocial impacts among workers (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/1348-9585.12132>), 3) conducted web-based questionnaire surveys on stress among workers, and 4) prepare for tele-cognitive behavioral therapy for psychiatric patients.”



In memoriam: Kristina Orth-Gomér



It is with great sadness that we are notifying the ISBM community of the passing of Professor Kristina Orth-Gomér on 14 May 2020. She leaves behind two children, three grandchildren and a life companion who greatly miss her.

Professor Orth-Gomér was the co-founder, second President and long-standing member of the ISBM Board. Since 1987, Prof Orth-Gomér participated at the ISBM founding (Steering/Advisory) committee together with Steve Weiss, Neil Schneiderman, Redford Williams, Irmela Florin and others. She was Program Chair and organized the first ISBM conference 1990 in Uppsala/Sweden. Afterwards, Prof Orth-Gomér became the ISBM president and has remained actively involved with ISBM for the last 30 years. In 2003 she founded the behavioral branch of the third "Task Force for European Guidelines on Cardiovascular Disease Prevention in the Clinical Practice", together with experts from the US, Spain, Finland, Sweden and Germany. In collaboration with Neil Schneiderman and Redford Williams, she initiated the integration of the German College of Psychosomatic Medicine as a full member society of ISBM. Prof Orth-Gomér's extensive research focused on coronary heart disease concerning the understanding of behavioral mechanisms, treatment possibilities and health issues in women leaves a lasting contribution for which she will be remembered. Prof Orth-Gomér's outstanding work in behavioural medicine was recognised by ISBM as the recipient of the "Behavioral Medicine Award" in 2004.

Kerry Sherman on behalf of ISBM



Board Members

Board Members 2016-2024

Urs M. Nater

President 2018-2020
University of Vienna, Austria
urs.nater@univie.ac.at

Anne H. Berman

President Elect 2018-2020
Karolinska Institutet, Sweden
anne.h.berman@ki.se

Maria Kleinstaeuber

Secretary 2016-2020
University of Otago, New Zealand
maria.kleinstaeuber@otago.ac.nz

Kerry Sherman

Communications Committee (Chair) 2018-2022
Macquarie University, Australia
Kerry.sherman@mq.edu.au

Pernilla Åsenlöf

Education and Training Committee (Chair) 2018-2022
Uppsala University, Sweden
pernilla.asenlof@neuro.uu.se

Briony Hill

INSPIRE Committee (Chair) 2018-2022
Monash University, Australia
briony.hill@monash.edu

Michael Hoyt (University of California, Irvine, USA)

Int. Journal of Behavioral Medicine (Editor) 2018-2024
mahoyt@uci.edu

Mette Terp Høybye

Nominations Committee (Chair) 2018-2020
Aarhus University
mette.terp.hoybye@rm.dk

Judith Prins

Scientific Program Committee (Chair) 2018-2020
Radboud University Medical Centre, Netherlands
judith.prins@radboudumc.nl

Frank J. Penedo

Past President/Awards Committee Chair 2018-2020
University of Miami, Florida, USA
frank.penedo@miami.edu

Beate Ditzen

Treasurer 2020-2024
University Hospital Heidelberg, Germany
beate.ditzen@med.uni-heidelberg.de

Susanne Fischer

Newsletter Editor 2020-2021
University of Zurich, Switzerland
s.fischer@psychologie.uzh.ch

Sherri Sheinfeld Gorin

Finance Committee (Chair) 2016-2020
sherri.gorin@gmail.com

Kazuhiro Yoshiuchi

International Collaborations Committee (Chair) 2018-2022
University of Tokyo, Japan
kyoshiuc-tyky@umin.ac.jp

Lara Traeger

Membership Committee 2020-2022
Harvard University, USA
ltraeger@mgh.harvard.edu

Elizabeth Seng

Organizational Liaison Committee 2018-2022
Albert Einstein College of Medicine, USA
elizabeth.seng@einstein.yu.edu

Bernd Leplow

Strategic Planning Committee (Chair) 2018-2022
Halle University, Germany
bernd.leplow@psych.uni-halle.de

Joost Dekker

Member-At-Large 2018-2020
VU University Medical Center, The Netherlands
j.dekker@vumc.nl