

Report on the meeting of the

## MEDICAL COMMISSION

### OF CISA-IKAR

(International Commission for Alpine Rescue)  
Malbun, Liechtenstein – 16-20 October 2002



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#### **Introduction**

With Dr. Ken Zafren unable to attend, and with much of the MedCom work completed earlier in the year with Ken in attendance at Barcelona, Spain at the World Congress of Mountain Doctors, I was invited to attend the IKAR MedCom meetings here in Liechtenstein in October 2002. After giving a presentation to my primary committee, the Terrestrial Commission, called "*Risks in Mountain Rescue*", I turned Terrestrial representation into the able hands of my alternate, Rick Lorenz of the Tacoma Mountain Rescue Unit.

The main themes for this conference for all commissions included:

- Evaluating Risk in mountain and rescue activities and possible IKAR Recommendations
- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)
- IKAR presentation to the EU (European Union) regarding IKAR status as international expertise resource.

#### **Gebhardt re new CD**

The IKAR MedCom continues to be a very active group, and works closely with the UIAA MedCom. Many members serve on both and are able to develop joint papers and recommendations which reduces redundancy in the SAR Medical community.

This year the IKAR Managing Committee began compiling all pertinent papers and presentations (ppt, etc.) on a CD. The CD is being finalized by February and would be available to members and others.

A demo of the EC 145 Helicopter was done during our stay in Liechtenstein, and Air Rescue pilots given opportunities to fly the aircraft.

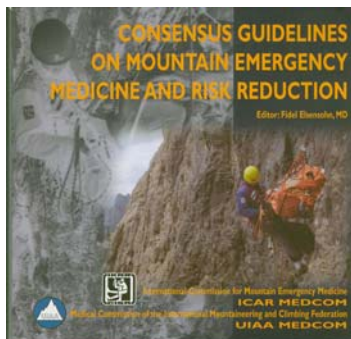
Upon our arrival the first day the weather was as Spring and lush green. By the next morning, the ground was covered with enough snow to ski.

Day excursions were done by the Avalanche, Air Rescue and Terrestrial groups to visit a testing lab, etc. Friday's dinner was at the top of the Malbun Ski lift lodge. Saturday night's banquet was the typical semi-black tie affair, hosted by the Liechtenstein Mountain Rescue group, and attended by the Mayor, Chief of Police, and the President of Liechtenstein, and performances were given by a small orchestra, school musicians and a local magician.

### **MedCom Guidelines Book**

MedCom IKAR – UIAA have produced the first comprehensive IKAR book on MedCom recommendations-standards in English which can be ordered at [www.stefanoni.it](http://www.stefanoni.it) for \$27 US/ EU including shipping, or from CASA EDITRICE STEFANONI, Corso promessi sposi, 30/b I-23900 LECCO, Italy.

The cost was underwritten by the Italian national rescue team *Il Corpo Nazionale Soccorso Alpino y Speleologico* (CSNAS) and the proceeds go to MedCom for outreach, training other groups, etc. The paperback includes a CD with translations into 10 other languages, and all MedCom recommendations-guidelines-standards for mountain rescue physicians, practitioners and public safety messages-papers. An addition to the next edition will include the NACA Scale, which is a European international trauma-illness severity scoring scale which is used by nearly all IKAR nations.



MedCom discussed and fine-tuned the revision of "*Medical Considerations in the Use of Helicopters in Mountain Rescue*", which included working the language of English to give the most universally understood meanings of words for all those who read the documents. Put as simply as possible, those words which we in the US understand as meaning one thing, may mean something else when translated to or from another language. This is important to consider when reading the various IKAR papers. Other papers under development include "*Use of AEDs in mountain rescue and remote areas*", and "*Prevention and On-Site Treatment of Lightning Injuries*".

Useful websites;

[www.ikar-cisa.org](http://www.ikar-cisa.org), may need of password

[www.mountainmedicine.org](http://www.mountainmedicine.org), which has most IKAR MedCom papers

[www.provinz.bz.it/avalanche](http://www.provinz.bz.it/avalanche), Avalanche Emergency, includes IKAR MedCom papers, but is in German.

[www.bruneck2000.com](http://www.bruneck2000.com), papers from the cold conference.

[www.ismmed.org](http://www.ismmed.org), International Society for Mountain Medicine

<http://alpinmedizin.org>, Austrian Society for Mountain Medicine

New Publications:

*High Altitude Medicine and Biology*

Frostbite paper is already published, Avalanche and Hypothermia is in press. Proposals are for Canyoning for Spring 2003 and Intubation and Immobilisation for Summer 2003.

## New Equipment

New equipment included my presentation on the Infusion Dynamics IV infuser ([www.infusiondynamics.com](http://www.infusiondynamics.com)), which has been tested successfully at the Grand Canyon and in the US military. About the size of a pack of cigarettes, it is compact and promotes air and obstruction warnings. At least one mountain rescue medical unit in Europe desires to test the device, but it is awaiting the European equivalent of the FDA approval for testing.



Dr. Mike Swangard of Canada showed a new Ortovox Patrol Pack designed with, and for, the Canadian Ski Patrol (CSP), a front loading pack which fits shovel, probe, splint, bivy sack, zip-off warning sign (slides over ski or snow board), and sports adjustable straps and front pockets. Price: about \$125.00.



## MedCom Membership

“Corresponding” members of the commission are now permitted in the form of units or individuals who are active in mountain rescue, but may not be formal members of the IKAR. The IKAR MedCom wants to provide a wider representation of ALS, BLS and first responder EMS providers in mountain rescuer. While in Europe a grand majority of ALS medical providers are physicians, we know that paramedics are the standard for pre-hospital ALS in the western hemisphere, and Dr. Brugger wants to encourage some paramedics, as well as BLS and first responder mountain rescuers to become part of the MedCom. These corresponding members would be encouraged to attend IKAR meetings and participate, however, much IKAR MedCom work can be done via email.

Dr. Brugger made a formal invitation to myself to join, and I would like to do so after I am able to turn over my position in terrestrial to a qualified candidate who can serve as the primary. Primary delegate Dr. Ken Zafren supports me as a MedCom alternate.

Corresponding membership within the MedCom has been recently granted to representatives of mountain rescue from Nepal – Director of the Himalayan Rescue Association, Dr. Buddha Basnyat, South Africa – Dr. Arthur Morgan, and Bariloche, Argentina – Dr. Ramon Chioconi.

On Friday, a special visit was made to the MedCom by Dr. Gerhardt Flora, a founder of the IKAR in 1948. Among other pioneering effects in pre World War II, Dr. Flora flew a fixed wing onto high mountain glaciers to deliver rescuers and supplies. He retired from the University of Innsbruck in Vascular Surgery.



### **Harness-related injuries revisited. Peter Mair**

Peter reported on the recent discussions in MedCom and the rescue community of Harness-related injuries. The problem of falling out of or inverting with the seat-only harness occurs usually after the initial fall or injury, when the patient is unconscious or is falling. Head injuries occur after the fall. Can the chest harness reduce head and other injuries? It is hypothesized and reported that the danger of injury actually appears to go up with use of chest harness because the injury now occurs to the cervical spine. A paper is pending.

- 57 cases studied with 75% more than a 10meter fall.
- >70% only used sit harness
- No correlation between severity of injury and type of harness used.
- No cases of hyperextension injury were found (contrary to what was expected from theoretical considerations)
- Clear correlation between severity of injury and climbing route. “Easy” routes had more severe injuries. Likely that contact with the rock is what causes injuries.
- Head down position *during* fall is equally common with both types of harness (sit harness or sit/chest harness combination)
- Prevention emphasis by *reducing number of falls*

### **Papers/ recommendations**

Before discussing these, let me point out something that will help the reader understand the papers. me of the papers may appear to western hemisphere practitioners as very elementary, but you must remember that in many countries there are no standards or protocols such as we have in the US, for example.

At the same time, mountain medicine has become specialized enough in some European nations that they have gone beyond the protocols or standards of “street” EMS to ones which are specific to mountain EMS.

### **Pending Papers**

1. Medical Considerations in the use of Helicopters in Mountain Rescue. Pending appendix. (Tomazin, et al)
2. Lightning (Zafren, et al)
3. Use of the AED in Mountain Rescue and Wilderness (Wiget, et al)
4. Organizational procedures for MedCom, including format for papers.

Physicians are accustomed to presenting papers in a generally accepted format, and this has worked well for the MedCom. Formalization is sought in order to ensure wider uniformity.

## **Availability and Training of First Responders in IKAR Countries (compendium of mountain rescue EMS programs)**

Concepts for new papers were discussed and Dr. Mike Swangard will organize a compendium of IKAR member units' medical programs. The areas will reportedly include those which would be valuable to further study to what level we actually train and compare to actual mountain illness-trauma calls occur. The categories will include: Level of training required for different personnel on your team, training curriculum/scope of practice of each, mountain medical protocols, response method (ground, air, etc.) All units, regardless of IKAR affiliation, are asked to submit this information to Dr. Swangard (@).

**Critical Incident Stress (CIS) and Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome(PTSS)** was discussed as a worthwhile area, and one of great recent concern. Only a few wilderness-based authors have completed work. Drs. Elsensohn and Demetz will lead this tasssk group and will acquire a recently described case study paper from the Netherlands has case study(ies) – Brugger.

## **New Papers**

1. Initial Assessment of Casualties in the Mountains (Thomas?)
2. Medical Assistance at Mass Events in the Mountains (Ledoux?)
3. On-site Treatment of the Snake Bite in the Mountains
4. World Status of Mountain Rescue (?) (Brugger)
5. Availability and Training of First Responders in IKAR Countries (Swangard)
6. Post Traumatic Stress Disorders in Mountain Accidents (Demetz)

MedCom papers continue to be published in various journals throughout the world.

## **Future Events**

- 13-16 March 2003. MedCom at Erjavceva Hut (1525m), Kranska Gora region, Slovenia.
- 16-20 June 2003. MedCom Southern Alps Canyoning Rescue Program
- 9-13 August 2003. Whistler, BC, Canada. MedCom at Wilderness Medical Society Conference, with WMS, UIAA, ISMM.
- 1-5 October 2003. IKAR Annual Conference. Coylumbridge, Scotland. Contact is David Syme. It will be windy and wet. 1344 m Ben Nevis. 25 units, 2 RAF. 100 miles S of Inverness. Airline port will be Glasgow/Edinburgh.
- April 2004. IKAR MedCom, Liechtenstein
- Oct-Nov 2004. IKAR 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. Zakopane, Poland. Hosted by the TOPR (Polish Mountain Rescue).
- 12-16 August 2004. Xining, Qinghai China. VI ISMM World Congress