

## SwissPedNet News – Introducing Klara Posfay Barbe, the new President of SwissPedNet

Christa E. Flück (resigning Board Member of SwissPedNet), Berne



In 2017, the SwissPedNet ([www.swisspednet.ch](http://www.swisspednet.ch)) celebrated its 5th anniversary. Funded initially in 2012 by representatives of the seven largest (university) children's hospitals, it since has grown into a research platform network including 11 hubs that are now partially funded by resources from the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI). With that, pediatric research is appearing for the first time on the action plan 2017-2020 of the Swiss Clinical Trial Organization (SCTO).

The SwissPedNet comprises nine clinical hubs plus two other bodies, the SwissPedPha and the SwissPedRegistry, all of which are supervised by the same Board and Advisory Board. Pascale Wenger is network coordinator of SwissPedNet.

In 2017, President of the past 5 years, David Nadal, Zurich, resigned. He handed over the presidency to Klara Posfay Barbe (formerly President elect), Geneva, at the annual meeting held on 17 November in Berne.

We would like to introduce the new President of SwissPedNet to the community of Swiss pediatricians.

### Short biography

Klara Posfay Barbe graduated from Medical School in Geneva in 1994, where she also received her doctoral degree in the same year. She did her residency in pediatrics at the Children's Hospital of the University Hospitals of Geneva (HUG), followed by a fellowship in pediatric infectiology at the Children's Hospital Pittsburgh, in Pennsylvania, the USA. She also completed a Master in Clinical Research in the USA, before returning to Geneva. Back in Geneva, she became head of the unit of pediatric infectiology, in charge of the pediatric care of children and families migrating into the country and seeking health care at the HUG. In addition, Klara is currently Director of the Pediatric Clinical Research Platform in Geneva, which was founded in 2005 and became a hub of SwissPedNet in 2012.

Her research career was supported by a SCORE grant of Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and a grant of Tremplin of the University of Geneva. She became Assistant Professor in 2011, Associate Professor in 2014, and Full Professor in 2017 following the nomination to Division head of general pediatrics of the HUG.

Her research topics include infectious diseases in immune-compromised patients (both iatrogenic and congenital), and airborne and nosocomial infectious disorders in children. Klara has been a member of the Geneva-based ethics committee for 15 years and has a strong interest in ethical questions concerning pediatric research.

### Short interview

**Klara, what has been the greatest success in your research career, so far?**

My greatest success to date is to have trained a number of young, successful clinical researchers through our Pediatric Clinical Research Platform. It gives me great pride to see them grow, learn, and become independent.

**What was the most difficult task in your research career to date?**

The most difficult aspect has been finding funding through grant submissions. It takes a lot of time, you have to follow deadlines, submission protocols, and provide prospective budgets. You usually do it on your own at the end, in a rush.

**Klara, what is your motivation to participate in SwissPedNet?**

As a pediatric clinical researcher, I know that I can only compete with other international groups if I collaborate with other researchers. Until SwissPedNet was founded, it was often easier to find partners outside of Switzerland, because one collaborates with colleagues, such as from our fellowships, etc. With SwissPedNet, however, we can finally build up studies within our country, with a similar case-mix, the same regulations, and a common perception of patient care. Meetings are also easier to organize. I hope that in the future, we can standardize many things related to clinical research, which will make our (and our researchers') lives easier. The fact that SwissPedNet received a grant from the Swiss Personalized Health Network (SPHN) project in November 2017 will indeed also help this matter, as this project aims to develop a standardized clinical dataset for children's health in Switzerland.

**What are your goals for SwissPedNet in 2018, and in the next 5 years?**

David Nadal and his Board did a fantastic job to date. They envisaged and constructed SwissPedNet according to a vision inspired by other similar pediatric networks in Europe. The foundation was laid, on which we can now build each hub to equal strength, as some were more advanced than others. The hubs obtained funding from SERI, precisely for this purpose. We now have to start increasing the links among the hubs through knowledge, education, and research projects. We will therefore organize field visits among the hubs, starting this spring (in 2018). In the fall of 2018, we will then hold a workshop/education program for young researchers and hub staff.

**Where do you see your role as President for SwissPedNet?**

My role as a President is to represent SwissPedNet and its members in different professional and political groups, but also to convey the Board's vision for the next years. I hope

to bring in new ideas on how to increase our successes, based on what I learned from leading the Geneva hub for several years.

#### **Where do you see challenges ahead?**

Switzerland is a small country. Our patient population is small, too. However, it has been repeatedly shown that the quality of our research is among the highest in the world and this is where we are attractive. Where necessary, we will have to convince international studies to involve us and we can show them that SwissPedNet can help them by providing a single-entry point. As a «Romande», I must say that our multilingual country can also be a challenge for multicenter studies. But there again, SwissPedNet could provide help in the future.

#### **What is needed to overcome these obstacles?**

We need to increase our communication skills, both inside and outside our country and participate in international groups with similar goals. SwissPedNet could provide Standard

Operating Procedures and could standardize protocols and documents for the patients, in all the main languages.

#### **How can general pediatricians working in private practice collaborate with SwissPedNet?**

Research is not limited to (university) hospitals. In many other countries, pediatricians in private practice are willing and able to contribute to pediatric clinical research. A good research question is good, wherever it comes from. SwissPedNet could help by providing links among researchers with similar interests and who are keen to collaborate with pediatricians in private practice. In addition, pediatricians could contribute to SwissPedNet studies by enrolling or following up on patients within any SwissPedNet study.

#### **Any final remarks for the readers of Paediatrica?**

SwissPedNet is a wonderful network of clinical researchers. It can (and will) boost the number of multicenter pediatric studies. Not

only will it increase their quality, but it will also help researchers in their tasks. The creation of hubs was the first step. Now, we have to increase the visibility of the network and the collaboration among the hubs. We are living in exciting times for pediatric research!

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