

IBSAR

The Newsletter of the Initiative for Biodiversity Studies in Arid Regions Issue No. 3 March 2003

This month's editorial is contributed by Dr. Bassem Saab. Bassem is conducting a study on a plant-based oil commonly used by local communities as a remedy for cough. The main objectives of the study are: to examine the role of this oil in ameliorating cough severity and frequency in patients with acute upper respiratory tract infection. To conduct double blind studies Bassem has had to seek the support of many of his colleagues and establish new contacts with various organizations

Editorial

Regards,

A keynote speaker in one of the annual meetings of the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine addressed the issue of evaluating graduate students and scholars. In her opinion one should be judged based on what s/he contributes to the community rather than by academic achievement per se. She added: what is the value of knowing without benefiting others?

While working on a research project under IBSAR, several questions and observations crossed my mind. I wondered about the real motive(s) to be involved in a research project. Is it interest in the subject, fame, the need for a publication to get promoted, or the impact of the work on the community? Is attitude taken seriously besides knowledge and skills, when we evaluate graduate students and scholars? How helpful are universities in addressing the concerns of their communities?

In one trip to Shatila camp to solicit volunteers to my project what I saw was eye shocking. It is worse than the Irish plight described by Frank McCourt in Angela's Ashes, a book that earned him the Pulitzer Prize. The "outside doctors" (as we sometimes call doctors working outside AUBMC) who work in underprivileged areas may know less but may serve more and do better service to a larger population.

The community is larger than those who come to us. There are many, who besides God need our experience. To help them, help our programs and ourselves, we need to step out of our ivory tower to the whole community.

Dr. Bassem Saab

For your precious contribution to this invaluable newsletter, including the editorial section contact M. Daouk at me11@aub.edu.lb
Submission deadlines 20th of each month.

News

New Faculty member joins IBSAR.

Malek Batal received his MSc in Food Science from AUB then his PhD in Nutrition from McGill University. He has been involved in studying the traditional food systems of Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic and Subarctic in Canada. Malek joined AUB in February 2002, and his research interests focus on community nutrition with emphasis on determinants of food choice behavior. He is also interested in the study of the nutritional, market, and cultural value of wild indigenous plants in Lebanon in order to promote locally available wild plants as a good source of limited nutrients in the Lebanese diet and for the preservation of ancestral culinary practices.

Meetings, contacts & Seminars

A database is being developed by N. Abou Ghazale, G. Catacora, A. Lakiss and K. Sleem who are compiling a list of contact persons involved in natural plants and plant products. These include farmers, producers, middlemen, importers, exporters and suppliers (More on the web)

IBSAR meetings. IBSAR meetings are scheduled every 2 weeks starting February 27, 2003. (Schedule of speakers on the web)

Meeting of 20 March. N. Kabbani gave a presentation on "The Economics of Bioprospecting: A Review of the Literature and Implications for Developing Countries" concluding that that the empirical estimates of the economic value of preserving the marginal species cover a very wide range, with the current best guess standing at less than \$10,000 per untested species. This estimate suggests that it is not a forgone conclusion that the market potential offered through bioprospecting

alone will be enough to promote biodiversity in developing countries. However, the interest of the world community in supporting biodiversity conservation might complement private sector incentives enough to jointly succeed in preserving biodiversity. (Minutes and presentation on the web)

Fund Raising

Funds received!

...

Proposals Submitted

Collaboration is being considered between IBSAR and Africa 70 (Italian NGO) to introduce and train women in the processing of herbal plants. (Contact person: S. Talhouk)

Collaboration is being considered between IBSAR and SPNL, Society for Protection of Nature in Lebanon (official partners of Bird Life International) to identify and develop Important bird areas in Lebanon (Contact person: S. Talhouk)

Publication from IBSAR

E. Barbour, V. Sagherian, S. N. Talhouk, R. Talhouk, M.Farran, F. Sleiman, and R. Sabra. 2003. *Impact of Melissa officinalis-extract administration in Broilers on immune responses to viruses and performance.* Journal of American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association Journal, In Press.