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## **MEDEX Newsletter**

15<sup>th</sup> February 2009

Quite a few things have happened since the last Newsletter so here goes.

**The Medex Hidden Valley Expedition** took place last autumn. This involved a stunning trek from Beni (west of Pokhara) around the Dhualagiri Circuit to the French Pass and into the Hidden Valley. Here we had our scientific Base Camp at 5,050 metres just below the Damphus Pass. The research went off almost without a hitch and 28 people summited the nearby Damphus Peak 6,035 metres. We also had a permit to climb Sita Chuchra (6,700 metres) but this turned out to be a mistake as it was too far from our base camp, it was also too long a ridge and too difficult. All in all not a good choice!

The trip was not without medical dramas though thankfully our own members were all relatively fit throughout. Other expeditions in this remote area did, however, exhibit a total indifference to the welfare of their local staff with fatal consequences. We believe strongly that all expeditions have a duty of care to their staff and this cannot be delegated to their local agent. We are planning to co-ordinate some student electives to survey the scale of porter mortality on these remote treks and expeditions. We expect to find a huge and under reported problem and, if so, we will make it our mission to publicise the plight of the porter with the hope that we can prevent future deaths due to ignorance and indifference.

With the research complete we all trooped over the Damphus Pass to descend to Marpha which turned out to be the apple pie capital of Nepal. By the time we left Marpha for Jomsom all those pies were already putting flesh back on the bones.

From Jomsom half the team flew back home whilst the remaining 26 headed north for a non-research jolly towards the Tibetan border. We spent a stunning 10 days enjoying the delights of the remote and restricted district of Mustang. We had many adventures on both foot and horseback with the Himalayas becoming a distant backdrop to the south. The many temples, stupas and shrines were all fantastic but, probably the most memorable moment was taking tea with the King of Mustang in his medieval palace in the walled city of Lo Manthang. The visit to Mustang was an extraordinary adventure.

**The Medical Expedition Altitude Symposium** was held just a few weeks after the Expedition amongst the stunning surroundings of Worcester College, Oxford. Annabel McKeown and George Wormald had done a wonderful job of assembling a distinguished international faculty. Jamie MacDonald and Sam Oliver headed up an impressive turnout from the Bangor University and many of their Sport Science

students were able to present preliminary findings from our Expedition. Polish (Rob) and American (James Anholm) Members had flown into present their findings too.

**The Mountain and High Altitude Medicine Course** at Plas y Brenin took place in early December. This course has now been running since 1993 and has become a crucial module in the Diploma in Mountain Medicine (Dip. Mtn. Med.).

**The Diploma** has continued to go from strength to strength. There are now 68 holders of this qualification and they are all listed on our website.

[http://medex.org.uk/diploma/diploma\\_holders.php](http://medex.org.uk/diploma/diploma_holders.php) . A new fifth cohort of candidates commenced their studies at Plas y Brenin in December

The annual **Medex Dinner in Langdale** in January was blessed with plunging temperatures and a surfeit of snow. The meal on the Saturday was as enjoyable as ever. On the Sunday morning Carol Darwin allowed us to invade her splendid home and make best use of her stunning audiovisual facilities to display various videos of the Expedition. The next annual dinner will be in January 2010. For pictures of the weekend and details of next year visit <http://medex.org.uk/membership/social-events.php>

In January the **Medex Website** had a complete makeover courtesy of my nephew Joe who some will remember from our 1994 Everest Expedition when he trekked up to Kala Patar. He has brought the website into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We now have Google Analytics installed on all pages so we can track downloads of the Medex Book in all of its languages. We also have various online questionnaires and registration facilities. There is a new Members' Newsgroup and a members' page designed to display links to Members' own websites, blog sites and photo galleries etc. Please visit our new website and let me know what else you would like included and use the online feedback forms.

**Consultation.** Some 60% our last Expedition took the time to complete a very [detailed feedback survey the full results of which are posted on the website](#). Just [click](#) to access. We have already shared this with our Nepalese Agent and hopefully it will enable us all to raise our game. It will make fascinating reading for all who took part in the Expedition. We have also used it to inform a much briefer survey that we are inviting all members to complete on line. The results of this will steer Medex into the future. PLEASE take the few moments necessary to fill out the [General Members' Questionnaire](#).

**The Medex Book – Travel at High Altitude.** Launched in October 2007 this has been an extraordinary success. 13,000 copies have been downloaded free of charge from our website and many thousands of paper copies are now in circulation. It is now available in German, Serbian, Greek and Nepalese with Dutch and French versions on the way. It has received universal acclaim from the various national alpine clubs as well as the British Mountaineering Council, Association of Alpine Guides and the UIAA (International Union of Alpine Associations). Many trekking companies are recommending it to their clients and it has been distributed in the various hospitals run by the Himalayan Rescue Association. If you know of anyone heading off to the mountains in need of practical, no nonsense advice on staying healthy then please steer them towards the Medex website.

**New and Existing Members.** We have been very lucky in that Medex has managed to attract a steady stream of new members and their joining fees have meant that we have been able to cover our tiny overheads without having to go back to existing members to renew their subscriptions. I am delighted to report that this model has now been working and stable for several years and so we have decided to adopt it officially for the future. Existing members will therefore remain members for the foreseeable future without any need to renew subscriptions. New members will continue to pay a one off joining fee of £45. I hope that this meets with your approval and that you will encourage new people to join. They can now do this online by visiting <http://medex.org.uk/membership/sign-up.php>

Changes of Contact details. Please use the online membership form to register changes in addresses, especially email addresses as this is our main means of keeping in touch.

**Academic.** A contingent are travelling out to next month's Hypoxia Symposium in Canada to present abstracts and members of our 1994 Everest Expedition have just published a very prestigious paper on the control of breathing. As abstracts emerge from the Hidden Valley we will be highlighting them on our website.

**Results of Consultation.** We are hoping for a good deal of useful feedback from members to help us shape the future so please send in your ideas via the website. Please send in your links for the Members' page and do join the new Newsgroup so that we can plan for an exciting future.

Best wishes for 2009.

Simon