



**ISRHML**  
The International Society  
for Research in Human  
Milk and Lactation

April 7, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

First of all, I hope that you are all well and safe in these challenging times. I have noted below how ISRHML has rapidly mobilized to curate emerging data related to SARS-CoV-2 in human milk. It has been an honor to have served as President-elect and President of ISRHML over the past four years. I have been a member of ISRHML for 35 years and the opportunity to contribute to the leadership of the society has been a highlight of my professional career. As I transition to past President, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect upon changes to the society, acknowledge those who have made it happen, and to highlight what I view as future opportunities for ISRHML.

I would first like to recognize **Lars Bode**, who during his Presidency initiated a number of important programs/changes that came to full fruition during his Past-Presidency. A key change was to bring on an association management company to provide infrastructure and financial management in October 2017. It has been a transition to move from a fully volunteer society to one with executive management support and I would like to acknowledge **JoAnn Tai**, **Kayla Stidger**, and **Ali Carlson** from GMP for their support and Secretary **Meghan Azad** and Treasurer **Nancy Hurst** for their patience as we worked through the new roles. A second key initiative was to establish formal MOU's with strategic partners, including ASN, APHS, and DOHaD. The DOHaD MOU led to ISRHML being invited to organize a symposium at the 2019 DOHaD conference in Melbourne and I foresee many future opportunities to collaborate with these societies and others. Lars also appointed a committee, chaired by Bert Koletzko, to develop guidelines for interactions between ISRHML and commercial entities. The guidelines were finalized in 2019 and the Executive Committee established protocols and procedures, including a standing COI Oversight Committee to review the disclosures. All officers and EC members and organizers of meetings and other educational programs are required to disclose annually their potential conflicts of interest pertaining to their role(s) in ISRHML. This will go a long way towards improving our transparency to members and funding partners.

I would also like to call out the [Trainee Interest Group \(TIG\)](#) for their proactive leadership! Started by **Sara Mouzkarel**, then led by **Janet Williams** and, currently, by co-Presidents **Yimin Chen** and **Melissa Theurich**, the TIGger's are out there supporting each other, blogging, posting videos and newsletters. They are the future of our society and the future looks bright!

I must also recognize the \$1 million USD support for the [Trainee Expansion Program \(TEP\)](#) provided by the **Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation (FLRF)** under the guidance of Dr. **Katharina Lichtner**. The program, which was launched in 2016 at the ISRHML conference in

South Africa, has supported 25 Trainee Travel Fund (~\$10,000 USD) and 6 Trainee Bridge Fund (~\$100,000 USD) recipients. I would also like to thank **Janet Prince, Kathrin Litwan** and **Silvester Popescu** from FLRF for their contributions to management of the program. Additionally, TEP President, **Donna Geddes** and the members of the **Scientific Review Board**, which was chaired by **Kim Michaelsen** and, currently chaired by **Kirsi Järvinen-Seppo**, have been instrumental in maintaining the high quality of the program. The TEP has been an incredible partnership between ISRHML and FLRF and ISRHML trainees and members, and the field at-large, have benefitted immensely from this program. Stay tuned for more information!

In the past year, ISRHML has also taken a greater role in disseminating information through our website and social media outlets, engaging over 350 new followers across our Facebook and Twitter platforms. The Society developed transparent policies and procedures and formed a **Social Media Committee** chaired by ISRHML Secretary Meghan Azad to provide oversight to our social media. I think that they are doing a great job! We are always looking for ways to highlight the accomplishments of our members, so please share your news with the Social Media Committee.

The impact of ISRHML is demonstrated by the fact that its members are increasingly being tapped for important committees that will lead to policies and recommendations globally and will help to chart the future for research in human milk and lactation. Here are just a few examples of initiatives in the US, but there are many other examples globally. In 2017, the USDA recognized the need to update its database on the nutrient composition of human milk. They reached out to ISRHML members to participate in a workshop, which resulted in a publication in *AJCN* in 2019 ([doi:10.1093/ajcn/nqz123](https://doi.org/10.1093/ajcn/nqz123)). More recently, ISRHML members were appointed to two National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine committees. The first committee, entitled "[Scanning New Evidence on the Nutrient Content of Human Milk](#)" included 5 ISRHML members of 6 on the committee. The second, entitled: "[Scoping Existing Guidelines for Feeding Recommendations for Infants and Young Children Under Age 2](#)", included ~40% ISRHML members. In January 2020, the NASEM also held a workshop to explore new evidence for [Nutrition During Pregnancy and Lactation](#), which included several ISRHML members. Finally, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans for 2020-2025 will include, for the first time, guidelines for infants from birth to 2 years (B24) and will have an increased emphasis on dietary guidelines for pregnant and lactating (P&L) women. **Kay Dewey** and I are serving on both of these subcommittees and Chair the B24 and P&L committees, respectively. All of these committees are identifying gaps in the existing in the literature, which should highlight the need for extensive funding for research. *These are just a few examples of a renewed focus on pregnancy, lactation, human milk composition and infant feeding recommendations that are going on in the U.S. If you are involved in other global or country/continent-based initiatives, please let ISRHML know so that we can highlight them on our website and via social media!*

Our society is ideally positioned to pull together the experts on emerging topics in record time. An example is the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), which has spread rapidly around the world, causing a pandemic that threatens global public health. A group of ISRHML members came together and within 1 week had developed working groups to set up communications and

to begin drafting recommendations for human milk analysis. A short summary of the existing evidence for the presence of SARS-CoV-2 in human milk and of the guidance for breastfeeding women from international agencies was produced and [posted to the ISRHML](#) website and **Lars Bode, Shelley McGuire and Paula Meier** spoke in a Facebook Live session organized and moderated by two TIG members, **Laura Gallant** and **Lauren Brink!** Within days, the Family Larsson Rosenquist Foundation had made a generous donation to Lars to activate investigations into the safety and protective functions of breastmilk. In addition, the group was able to organize a phone call with leaders from NIH, USAID, CDC, BMGF and WHO to talk about milk sampling, milk analysis and coordinating research! Truly incredible in terms of the rapid time to response and the reach of ISRHML! If you would like to be more involved, contact Ryan Pace [rmpace@uidaho.edu](mailto:rmpace@uidaho.edu) about how join the Slack group and follow the ISRHML Facebook and Twitter for updates.

I believe that our society is thriving and that our members are poised to make even greater contributions to the field. Our membership continues to grow and we are increasing our international presence and representation. The 2018 conference in Japan was highly successful and led to increased membership in Asia and greater links to researchers and clinicians in China, and to a well-attended scientific workshop on human milk research held in Beijing in 2019. We anticipate an equally successful conference in Stockholm in 2020. We wish to continue to build the global reach of our members, so please encourage your colleagues to join the society.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the contributions of all of the officers and EC members who have contributed to the success of ISRHML. I want to recognize **Teresa da Costa, Nathan Nickel** and **Evette van Niekerk**, who are completing their terms on the Executive Committee members, and to welcome **Magnus Dommellöf, Zhenghong (Carrie) Li, and Diane Spatz** as new Executive Council members. Our Executive Committee now includes members from 8 countries, which is fantastic! I am confident that the society is in strong hands with our EC, President, **Bert Koletzko**, President-elect **Dan Sellen**, continuing EC members and our Secretary Meghan Azad and Treasurer Nancy Hurst. As noted by Bert in his in-coming President message last week, ISRHML is **YOUR** society. We need member input and contributions to build upon our accomplishments and move the society forward. Please feel free to reach out the society with ideas and suggestions.

Best Regards,



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