Internet based treatment of eating disorders, looking back and looking forward

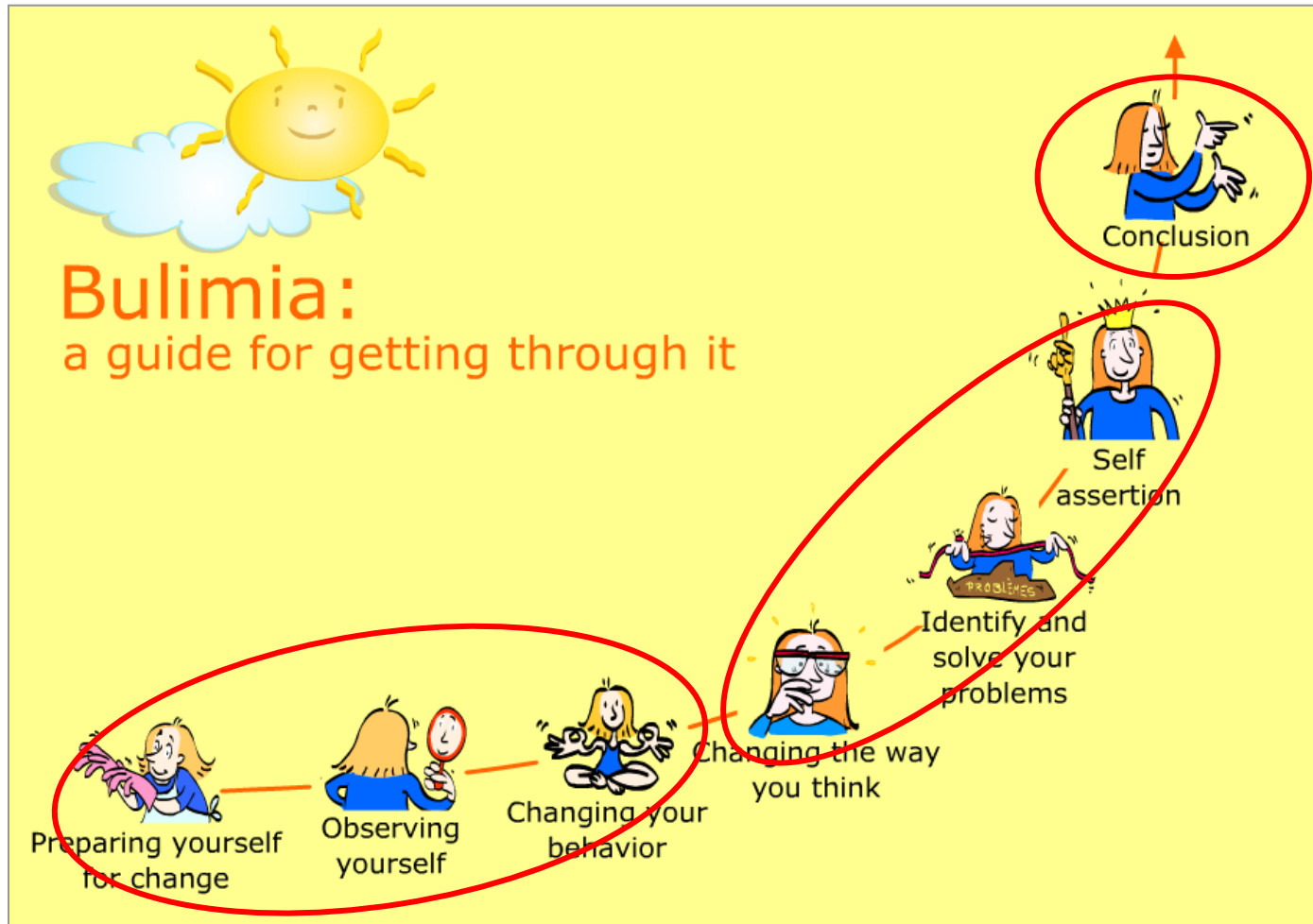**Tony Lam , CEO**
NetUnion, Lausanne

Salut

- European research project (2001-2004)

- Applying IT to treatment support of eating disorders

- Developed Online guided Self Help for Program for Bulimia

- Clinical evaluation in 4 European countries (SE, CH, DE, ES)
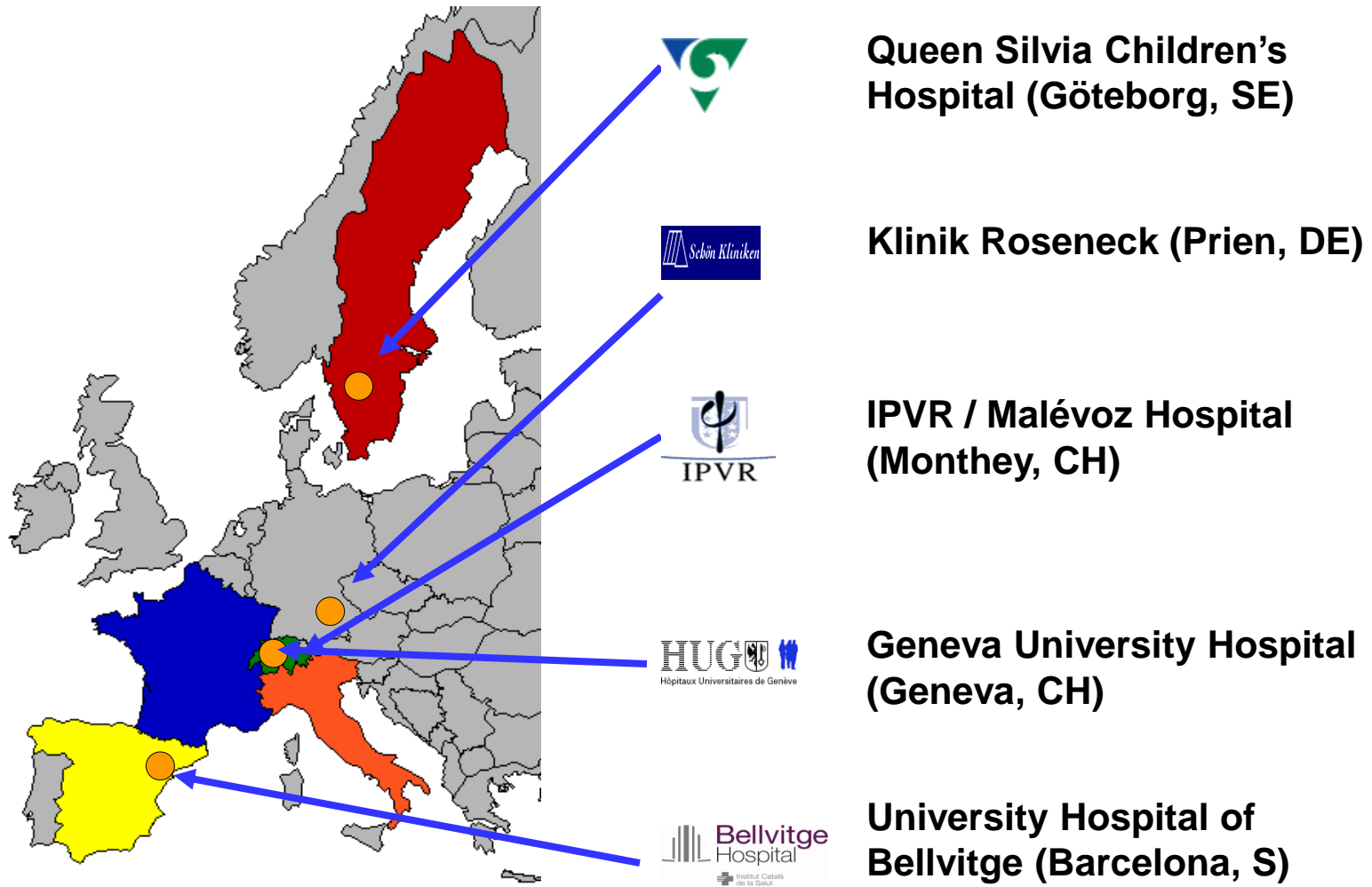
Background

- Positive results on the use of an **online program for the prevention** of eating disorders in an at risk population (Winzelberg et al, 2000)

- Use of **e-mails** in the identification and treatment of bulimia nervosa (Robinson & Serfaty, 2001)

- CBT treatment for bulimia nervosa delivered by **CD-ROM**

- Internet-based treatment of psychiatric disorders : **depression, PTSD, anxiety disorders**

The SHG : 7 modules

Studies centres 2001 - 2004

Queen Silvia Children's Hospital (Göteborg, SE)

Klinik Roseneck (Prien, DE)

IPVR / Malévoz Hospital (Monthey, CH)

Geneva University Hospital (Geneva, CH)

University Hospital of Bellvitge (Barcelona, S)

Common Protocol

- Participants
  - Women with BN or EDNOS purging type (DSM-IV)
  - BMI > 17.5

- Evaluations : pre – 4 months

- Core questionnaires : EDI-2 and SCL-90R

Results

- Publications of single country results:
  (Carrard & Rouget 2006, Liwowsky, 2006, Nevonen, 2006, Fernandez-Aranda, 2008)

- Preliminary analysis of aggregated European data follows.

Population characteristics

- 127 women
- Age = 24.7: (range : 18 to 43, SD = 5.1)
- BMI = 21.5: (range : 17.5 to 33.65, SD = 2.9)
- Illness length : 8.4 (range : 1 to 29, SD = 5.4)

- Differences among populations
  - German less severe, Swiss in middle, Spain and Sweden more severe.

➡ Representative of a population met in a clinical setting

Edi-2 subscales and SCL-90 GSI
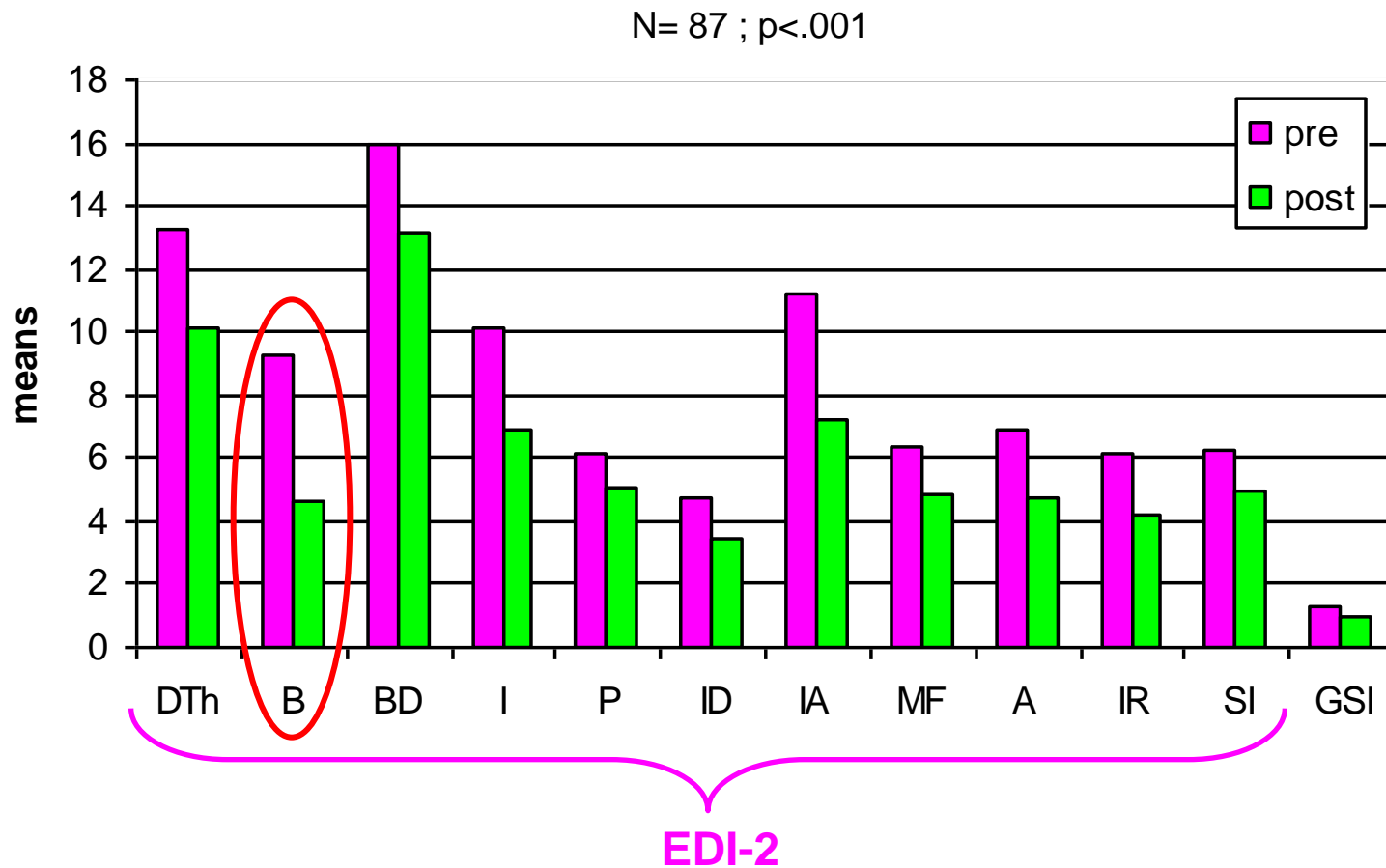
Compliance

- **42.2%** of completers finished the 7 modules
  - 25.3% modules 1-3
  - 32.7% modules 4-6

- Key Observation: .
  - No correlation between modules completed and BN symptoms at post assessment
  - Food diary and bulimia nervosa symptoms at post assessment : r=-0.23 , p<.05

Dropout

- Definition: Four weeks without any connection or e-mail contact

- 25.2 % for the whole sample
    - Germany : 4%
    - Sweden : 11.8 %
    - Switzerland : 35.7%
    - Spain : 38.7 %

- No predictors found

Conclusions

Encouraging results

- Participants were interested and satisfied
- Good results on EDI-2 and SCL-90 scales

• Limitations:

- Control group, short follow up

Further research

- Difference in drop out?
  - Coach effect? Severity?

- Longer term follow-up

- More engaging interactions

Followup studies (2006 – 2009)

Austria: Medical University Vienna
- RCT Bibiliotherapy vs Internet (2006 – 2008)

Holland: PYSQ,
- Clinical pilot evaluation (2006 – 2008)

Sweden: Stockholm Center for Eating Disorders
- RCT Group therapy, guided Bibilotherapy, vs Internet (Launch Oct 2009)

Looking Forward

- Using serious games, and biofeedback as therapeutic support interactions.

    - Learning planning skills – premediation
    - Tolerance to frustration
    - Relaxation

- <u>Islands - serious game for therapeutic support</u> under development in the Playmancer project.

Thank you for your attention !

Special thanks to : Salut Partners

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