29th ESPID Annual Meeting in The Hague, the Netherlands

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The 29th ESPID Annual Meeting was organized in the World Forum in The Hague, the Netherlands from June 7 to 11, 2011. The main theme of the Meeting was *Frontiers in Paediatric Infectious Diseases*. This theme was chosen because it offered the opportunity to present novel research in all areas of pediatric infectious diseases (PID). Well over 3000 participants from all over the world visited the Meeting, making it the largest pediatric infectious disease meeting in the world.

Our sister society from North America contributed to the program, for the first time officially, with a symposium entitled *Cutting Edge Issues in Pediatric Infectious Diseases*. David Kimberlin, Kathy Edwards and Dan Kastner presented the newest developments on screening and treatment of congenital cytomegalovirus infection, prevention of severe pertussis in the first year of life, and genetic testing and treatment of periodic fever syndromes.

We were fortunate enough to have two Nobel laureates present a lecture. Professor Barre-Sinoussi, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 2008 for her role in the discovery of the HIV virus, gave an inspiring talk in the Opening Symposium on the WHO Millennium Goal *Can We Learn From Mother to Child Transmission of HIV-1?*. HIV continues to be a major healthcare problem, especially in developing countries. Diana Gibbs, an internationally renowned expert on HIV in children, presented the latest developments in the clinical aspects and treatment of this very important field.

An absolute highlight of this meeting was the lecture by Ada Yonath, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 2009, for her work on the structure and function of the ribosome. Her unique presentation of this very complex subject, under the title *David and Goliath: How Do Small Antibiotics Paralyze the Giant Ribosome?*, was enlightening but most of all fun! Professor Yonath may have been the first ever to receive a standing ovation in an ESPID meeting.

From the very start of the organization of this meeting, it was clear that we wanted to ensure a truly international and interdisciplinary meeting, where not just infectious diseases problems in Europe or the Western world were discussed, but also, and perhaps equally important, those in developing countries. One of the driving forces behind the fight against infectious diseases in developing countries is of course Richard Horton, editor-in-chief of *The Lancet*. Dr. Horton gave a passionate talk on the paradox of global health: success, yet crisis. How come? He urged ESPID to become more actively involved in the healthcare problems of mothers and children in developing countries.

Each year, the ESPID Board selects a candidate for the Bill Marshall Award. This year, in keeping with the intercontinental character of the 29th meeting, the recipient was Dr. Steven Black, Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Cincinnati Children’s Hospital in the United States. Professor Black held a lecture entitled *Vaccine Safety and Public Confidence: A Vision for the Next Decade*.

Professor Black has spent well over 20 years conducting clinical trials and safety studies of vaccines and as principal investigator in 5 pivotal licensure trials and 6 phase IV postmarketing trials. Steven received his MD degree from the University of California at San Diego and his specialty training in PID at the University of California at San Francisco. He has been a long-time and highly respected member of our Society. Over the years, Steven has contributed to virtually every meeting. His academic interests include the use of clinical databases to evaluate vaccine safety and efficacy and the conduct of vaccine clinical trials.

It is important in this day and age to acknowledge the multidisciplinary approach in PID research. For this reason we wanted to include speakers from a variety of backgrounds. For example, we invited Professor Osterhaus from the Erasmus University of Rotterdam, a veterinarian and virologist, to discuss novel virus infections in humans and animals. The molecular diagnosis of different pediatric infections was addressed in a symposium on frontiers in the diagnosis of infectious diseases. Another session on new therapeutic modalities discussed the role of pharmacogenomics and antimicrobial agents.

Tropical and neglected diseases were a major focus of this meeting. Zulfiqar Bhutta (Pakistan), David Molyneux (United Kingdom), Shyam Sundar (India) and Ben Marais (South Africa) discussed the impact of a variety of tropical diseases in developing countries.

As is true each year, the Best of ESPID session was one of the many highlights of the meeting. The ESPID Fellowship Awards were given to Ulrich von Both (Germany) to study the immune pathogenesis of childhood tuberculosis, and to Elias Losifidis (Greece) to work on the implementation of ventilator-assisted pneumonia, prevention bundle and antimicrobial stewardship in the pediatric intensive care unit.

Valtyr Thors (Iceland) received the ESPID–Wyeth Fellowship Award to study at the University of Bristol with Professor Adam Finn on the effects of live attenuated trivalent intranasal influenza vaccine on nasopharyngeal colonization in young healthy children. Two Young Investigator Awards were presented to Elske van Gils (the Netherlands) and Merit Melin (Finland).

The Meeting in The Hague introduced new concepts for ESPID such as ePoster sessions, which were incredibly successful and surpassed expectations, and a session on literature review, chaired by Karina Butler (Ireland) and Yu Lung Lau (Hong Kong). A large number of network meetings were organized, illustrating the importance of collaboration within Europe and between Europe and the rest of the world.

Professor Mike Sharland (United Kingdom) has been working tirelessly on a European counterpart of the American Red Book. His efforts and those of many European colleagues resulted in the European Blue Book. During the Opening Session the first book was presented to Ulrich Heininger, president of ESPID.

For the third time, the Annual ESPID Meeting was concluded by the ESPID Research Masterclass. This masterclass under the inspiring leadership of 2010 Bill Marshall Awardee Jussi Mertsola (Finland) was again an enormous success. More than 12 research groups from many European countries presented their research in an informal, interactive setting. And this year, we also had a group from Brazil! The masterclass ended with a sailing trip for all the participants on the Ijsselmeer on 2 historic sailing ships.

As organizers of the 2011 meeting, we would like to urge all PID specialists and other interested professionals to attend the next meeting in Thessaloniki, Greece. The 2012 meeting is being organized by Emmanuel Roilides, and it promises to be as successful as our meeting. For those of you who have never attended an ESPID meeting and feel it may be too scientific or too far away, reconsider! All ESPID meetings, including the 2011 meeting in The Hague, provide a wonderful social program introducing you to everything the host city and country have to offer and the opportunity to meet colleagues and make friends for life.

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