

European Medical Research Councils (EMRC)

Editorial

The summer has been busy with actions following on several important EMRC activities. Pursuing the effort of the Investigator-Driven Clinical Trials (IDCT) Forward Look Report published by the EMRC in March 2009 (www.esf.org/emrc/idct), an Implementation Workshop (IW) was held in Paris on 29 and 30 June. The purpose of this IW was to gather a panel of 20 European experts to identify how the five major recommendations presented in the report should be implemented.

We were highly honoured to welcome Dr. Ruxandra Draghia-Akli, the new Director of the Health Directorate at the European Commission's DG Research. Dr. Draghia-Akli is recognised as a global leader in the field of DNA delivery for therapeutic and vaccination applications. In her previous position, she served as Vice-President of Research at VGX Pharmaceuticals, Immune Therapeutics Division. Dr. Draghia-Akli is the author of numerous biomedical publications and patents, and has served as a reviewer for manuscripts and granting agencies, such as the European Union, the NIH and the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture). I would like to take this opportunity to welcome her to this new position and wish her the best of luck for her return to Europe. We at the EMRC look forward to a fruitful collaboration.

The Paris workshop focused on several essential necessities: First, there is a need to engage the public in this debate and patient organisations in particular. Second, broader spectrum meetings should be held on this matter. Dr. Frédéric Sgard (OECD) proposed, assuming that a few member states express an interest, that the meeting to discuss a risk-based approach for regulation of IDCT be organised in the format of an OECD global science forum. With respect to funding mechanisms, EMRC and the DG Research Health Directorate will organise a meeting together in Brussels on 10 November 2009, and it is agreed that EMRC will publish a Science Policy Briefing at the end of 2009.

EMRC has been asked by Dr. Draghia-Akli, DG Research and EUROHORCs to help find out how the Ethical Committee systems are organised in the Member Organisation countries. We hope you will help the EMRC on this matter.

The 55th Plenary Meeting of the EMRC Standing Committee will be held on 13-14 October 2009 in the *Domus Medica* in Copenhagen. During the first day a mini-symposium will take place on strategies for medical research.

I would like to conclude with a warm thank you to Dr. Carole Moquin-Patthey for five years of excellent leadership of the EMRC Unit, and to congratulate Carole on her new position at ESF. We are grateful that she will stay with us at ESF.

Lotte,
Professor Liselotte Højgaard, MD DMSc
EMRC Chair



It has been my great privilege to work with you and for you for the past five years. When joining the ESF in January 2005, my ambition was to promote clinical research in Europe. That ambition would have been futile without your expert contribution, the leadership of the EMRC Chair, the support of the ESF Directorate and colleagues, and the hard work of the Medical Sciences Unit. Thank you to all of you!

My renewed ambition when getting involved with corporate science strategy development is to boost projects such as 'IDCT' across all areas for the benefit of European science, and still to have fun!

Carole,
Dr. Carole Moquin-Patthey, PharmD PhD
Head of Medical Sciences Unit and
Corporate Science Strategy Development Unit

Highlights

Humans in Space for Life Sciences 17th International Academy of Astronautics (IAA) Humans in Space Symposium 7-11 June, Moscow, Russia



The 17th International Academy of Astronautics Humans in Space Symposium dedicated to 'Humans in Space for Life Sciences Developing, Peace and Progress on Earth' was held between 7-11 June at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow, Russia. The symposium was organised by the State Scientific Centre of the Russian Federation Institute of Biomedical Problems (IBMP) and dedicated to the memory of the prominent Russian scientist Oleg G. Gazenko (1918-2007). The symposium was chaired by V. Baranov (Institute of General Pathology and Pathophysiology, Russia).

A large number of sessions were dedicated to medicine covering a wide range of fields from microgravity-induced skeletal muscle alterations to radiation safety in space and behaviour and performance. According to Dr. Leroy Chiao, a former astronaut from the National Space Biomedical Research Institute (NSBRI) in the USA, the most significant biomedical problem relating to humans in space is radiation. In addition, a talk presented by Professor H.J. Majima from the Kagoshima University Graduate School of Medical and Dental Sciences in Japan, suggested that low-dose space irradiation may increase the risk in space of cancer and neurodegenerative diseases through intracellular oxidative stress and reduction of apoptosis-related gene expression.

Three European Space Agency Announcements of Opportunity (AO), including the international AO on Life Sciences, have been released by the European Space Agency (ESA), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) on 14 May featuring the role of ESF for Peer Review:

- International Research Opportunities for Flight Experiments in Space Life Sciences on the ISS, Physical Sciences and Biology
- Life Science Research Using the Spaceflight Analogue 'Bed Rest'

Submission deadline for proposals **14 September 2009**

More at: iaa-his2009.imbp.ru/index00e-e.html
www.esa.int/SPECIALS/HSF_Research

International Society for Stem Cell Research (ISSCR) 7th Annual Meeting

8-11 July, Barcelona, Spain



The city of Barcelona provided a beautiful backdrop for the ISSCR's first meeting in Europe that brought together more than 3 100 researchers from around the world to discuss many

facets of stem cell science and technology. The conference was chaired by Professor Fiona M. Watt (Cancer Research-UK Cambridge Research Institute). Keynote Speaker Professor Nancy Wexler opened the meeting explaining the discovery of the genetic mutation that underlies Huntington's disease. The most important sessions in terms of clinical applications were 'Cells that build bodies', 'Stem cells and cancer' and 'Clinical translation of stem cells'. Some examples of diseases treated in the USA with stem cell-based therapies presented in the latter session included osteogenesis imperfecta, recessive dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa and glioma.

It is important to note that the now completed EUROCORES Programme, EuroSTELLS, provided financial support for the ISSCR Task Force to prepare their 'Guidelines for the Clinical Translation of Stem Cells' published in December 2008. Following this, these guidelines were used by the National Institutes of Health to write their 'Guidelines for Human Stem Cell Research' published in July 2009.

In addition, the ISSCR meeting provided an opportunity for the promotion of travel grants in the context of the REMEDIC Research Networking Programme chaired by Professor Yrjö Konttinen. It also enabled networking with stem cell researchers who could be interested in the future Science Policy Briefing on 'Human Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine' (expected in autumn 2009).

More at: www.isscr.org/meetings

Research Networking Programmes

The Research Networking Programme on Frontiers of Functional Genomics (FFG) seeks to connect the most promising developments in functional genomics technologies with the expanding concept of systems biology, focusing particularly on applications in biomedicine, as well as the environment and implications for society at large. FFG invites proposals from organisers of science meetings to be held in 2009 or 2010 on topics with a connection to the programme. FFG is also offering support for Short Visits (up to 15 days) and Exchange Grants (up to 6 months).

Submission deadline for proposals **25 September 2009**
More at: www.esf.org/ffg

Events 2009-2010

1st Steering Committee Meetings

- **EuroGlycoScience** – 20 April 2009 – Strasbourg, France

The EuroGlycoScience Forum is a Research Networking Programme which aims at providing a resource for information and training in all aspects of glycoscience. It would like to play a role in fostering international links with other groups such as those throughout Europe, the USA and Japan. Glycoscience is a term used to describe all the areas which relate to complex carbohydrates, their synthesis and biosynthesis, analysis, function and applications. A significant number of European laboratories are considered as being at the forefront of current glycoscience research. Whilst important discoveries have been made in the individual disciplines of glycoscience, it is generally recognised that future successes will rely on large interdisciplinary consortia with sufficient tools and resources to address the complex questions that lie ahead.

More at: www.esf.org/biolupus
www.esf.org/esf-ensat
www.glycosciences.org.uk

- **BIOLUPUS** – 13 June 2009 – Copenhagen, Denmark
The Research Networking Programme for the identification of novel genes and biomarkers for systemic lupus erythematosus has the long-term objective of applying genomics, proteomics and the use of translational databases to identify biomarkers of clinical utility in the treatment of systemic lupus erythematosus. The network will serve as a basis for the creation of a database with clinical, environmental and demographic information that can be used for genetics studies as well as clinical trials of new drugs.
- **ESF-ENS@T** – 2 July 2009 – Strasbourg, France
The Research Networking Programme for the study of adrenal tumours is focused on understanding adrenal tumours that generate both the threats associated with hormone hypersecretion (particularly hypertension) and those associated with the oncogenic potency of the tumour. Its goal is to bring already existing networks on adrenal tumours to the European level by enrolling new teams. The main objective of the Programme is to expand and develop a database for each type of adrenal tumour that would contain information on tissue collection, clinical data and disease-oriented registries.



- **Natural Products Chemistry, Biology and Medicine II**
ESF-COST High-Level Research Conference
29 August – 3 September, Acquafredda di Maratea, Italy
- **Bionanotechnology: Development and Application of Principles of Nano- and Bio-Sciences to Sensing, Diagnostics & Therapy**
Exploratory Workshop EW08-005
31 August – 2 September, Sintra, Portugal
- **Neurodevelopmental Programming and Phenotypic Plasticity: Implications for Healthy Ageing and Longevity**
EUROCORES EuroSTRESS – Summer School
6-13 September, Rhodes, Greece
- **Understanding the Genetic, Physiological and Psychological Mechanisms Underlying Disabling Medically Unexplained Symptoms and Somatisation**
Exploratory Workshop EW08-041
10-12 September, Munich, Germany
- **Computational Principles of Sensorimotor Learning**
RNP ERNI-HSF – Workshop
13-15 September, Kloster Irsee, Germany
- **Gene Expression to Neurobiology and Behaviour: Human Brain Development and Developmental Disorders**
ESF-EMBO Research Conference
20-25 September, Sant Feliu de Guixols, Spain
- **Final Report Launching Event**
Forward Look – European Systems in a Changing World
21 September, Brussels, Belgium
- **Can Complexity Improve European Health Policy?**
Exploratory Workshop EW08-007
23-25 September, Lancaster, United Kingdom
- **Development Interlinking of Adrenal Tumour Databases (tbc)**
RNP ESF-ENS@T – Workshop
25-26 September, Padua, Italy
- **Stem Cells for Bone Regeneration**
RNP REMEDIC – Workshop
8-10 October, Bertinoro, Italy
- **EMRC Core Group and 55th Plenary Meetings**
12-14 October, Copenhagen, Denmark
- **Multidisciplinary Workshop on Suffering**
Exploratory Workshop EW08-024
15-17 October, Luxembourg, Luxembourg
- **Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infection in Europe**
Exploratory Workshop EW08-025
22-24 October, Budapest, Hungary
- **Proteomics and Bioinformatics**
RNP Fuminomics – Workshop
22-25 October, Bucharest, Romania

- **The Adolescent Brain: New Insights from Clinical and Animal Models**
Exploratory Workshop EW08-033
22-25 October, Rome, Italy
- **Biobanks II**
ESF-UB Conference in Biomedicine
7-12 November, Sant Feliu de Guixols, Spain
- **Rare Diseases II: Hearing & Sight Loss**
ESF-UB Conference in Biomedicine
22-27 November, Sant Feliu de Guixols, Spain
- **Exploring New Directions for the Assessment of Dietary Intake and Physical Activity Levels in Population Studies that Aim to Tackle the Obesity Epidemic Across Europe**
Exploratory Workshop EW08-011
25-27 November, Middlesbrough, United Kingdom

2010

- **EMRC Core Group Meeting**
4-5 February, Bruges, Belgium
- **4th Conference on Functional Genomics and Disease**
RNP FFG (Frontiers of Functional Genomics)
14-17 April, Dresden, Germany

- **EMRC Core Group and 56th Plenary Meetings**
21-23 April, Berlin, Germany
- **Role of Insular Cortex**
RNP ERNI-HSF – Workshop (tbc)
Spring, Granada, Spain
- **Antiviral Applications of RNA Interference**
ESF-EMBO Symposium
30 May-4 June, Sant Feliu de Guixols, Spain
- **Parietal Lobe Function**
RNP ERNI-HSF – International Conference
20-21 September, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- **Emergent Properties of the Cytoskeleton: Molecules to Cells**
ESF-EMBO Symposium
3-8 October, Sant Feliu de Guixols, Spain
- **Functional Neurobiology in Minibrains: From Flies to Robots and Back Again**
ESF-EMBO Symposium
17-22 October, Sant Feliu de Guixols, Spain
- **Molecular Perspectives on Protein-Protein Interactions**
ESF-EMBO Symposium
21-26 November, Sant Feliu de Guixols, Spain
- **EMRC Core Group and 57th Plenary Meetings**
11-13 October, Strasbourg, France

ESF

The European Science Foundation (ESF) is an independent, non-governmental organisation, the members of which are 80 national funding agencies, research-performing agencies, academies and learned societies from 30 countries.

The strength of ESF lies in the influential membership and in its ability to bring together the different domains of European science in order to meet the challenges of the future.

Since its establishment in 1974, ESF, which has its headquarters in Strasbourg with offices in Brussels and Ostend, has assembled a host of organisations that span all disciplines of science, to create a common platform for cross-border cooperation in Europe.

ESF is dedicated to promote collaboration in scientific research, funding of research and science policy across Europe. Through its activities and instruments ESF has made major contributions to science in a global context. The ESF covers the following scientific domains: Humanities; Life, Earth and Environmental Sciences; Medical Sciences; Physical and Engineering Sciences; Social Sciences; Marine Sciences; Nuclear Physics; Polar Sciences; Radio Astronomy Frequencies; Space Sciences.

EMRC

The European Medical Research Councils (EMRC) is the membership organisation for all the medical research councils in Europe under the auspices of the ESF. EMRC's mission is to promote innovative medical research and its clinical application towards improving human health. EMRC offers authoritative strategic advice for policy making, research management, ethics and better health services. In its activities, EMRC serves as the voice of its Member Organisations within the European scientific community. EMRC disseminates knowledge and promotes the socio-economic value of medical research to the general public and decision makers.

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