

ESF RESEARCH CONFERENCES

Rapporteur Report

Partnership:	Europe-Africa Frontier Research Conference Series
Conference Title:	Infectious Diseases: From Basic to Translational Research
Dates:	4-9 April 2009
Chair:	Monique Capron/Iqbal Parker
Rapporteur:	Martin Röllinghoff

Quality of Scientific Programme, Presentations and Discussion

The Europe-Africa frontier research conference entitled 'Infections disease: from basic to translational research' took place near Cape Town in South Africa from 4th to 9th April 2009.

The two chairs Professor Monique Capron and Professor Iqbal Parker have done a great job in selecting many outstanding scientists from Europe as well as from Africa, who covered in seven sessions, genetic aspects, genetics of vectors, emerging bacterial and viral diseases, the immune response and pathogenesis, drug resistance and discovery and finally also intervention strategies and social aspects of infectious diseases.

Malaria and tuberculosis were in the center of the lectures of many speakers, in particular the one made by Fotis Kafatos, who reviewed the importance of the vector biology in malaria and also in the talks of Bouke de Jong, Stewart Cole and Stefan Kaufmann, who spoke about news aspects in tuberculosis and Buruli ulcer.

Further highlights of the conference were the contributions of Monique Capron from Pasteur Institute in Lille on the state-of-the art of a vaccine against schistosomiasis and by David Dunne from Cambridge on the regulation of human IgE responses to chronic schistosomiasis. Each of the seven session were followed by one or two short talks given by younger scientists, and on Sunday evening by a poster session with 60 posters and vivid discussions around cheese and wine.

Of particular interest for the African scientists were the informative presentations by representatives of the European Research Council, the European Commission and the European Molecular Biology Organisation which introduced various ways for African scientists on how to cooperate with European scientists and obtain grant money.

Informal Networking and Exchange; Atmosphere

There were vivid discussions and many new contacts were made between the African participants.

Balance of Participants

All together the conference which has attracted an audience of about 100 African and European scientists, the balance being in favor of the Africans, was a full success.

Outlook and Future Developments

At the end of the conference the participants aired their great wish that a similar conference should be organised in the coming years with the same broad title but concentrating more on diseases that were not dealt with at this occasion, for instance viral diseases such as Ebola fever and human Papilloma virus induced cancers, Herpes virus and Herpes virus induced cancers. Also new drug-discovery should be discussed. This future conference could perhaps take place in two years time either in West- or East-Africa, so that these parts of Africa would benefit a little more from the conference. As a precaution I have tentatively asked David Dunne from Cambridge and Bouke de Jong from Gambia whether they would be prepared to act as chairs in such a follow up conference and they were very positive about such a possibility.

Summary & Overall Assessment

It should also be mentioned as an important outcome of the conference that Monique Capron was invited by the editor in chief of the FEMS (Federation of European Microbiological Societies) Journal for a special edition on neglected

infectious diseases illustrated by topics presented at the conference comprising up to four reviews and 15 papers, but this will not be in the hand of ESF. I like to recommend very much to ESF that such a follow-up conference should take place again in 2 years.

About ESF Research Conferences

The Scheme

This conference is part of the European Science Foundation's (ESF) Research Conferences Scheme. The Scheme aims to promote scientific excellence and frontier level research throughout Europe and the rest of the world. Conferences aim to provide leading scientists and other participants, including young researchers, with a platform to present their work, to discuss the most recent developments in their fields of research and to network.

Conference Format

The core activities should be based on lectures by invited speakers, who are leaders in their respective fields, followed by extensive discussion periods. An informal exchange of ideas, both inside and outside the lecture room, should be encouraged, and the number of sessions in the daily timetable should be limited in order to allow sufficient time for interaction between the participants. Time should be reserved for a 'Forward Look Plenary Discussion' about future developments in the field.

Participants can take all their meals together to encourage further contact and networking, which can be particularly beneficial to younger researchers who may be less outspoken in the formal lecture room setting. In order to gain optimum benefit from the conference, both the speakers and the participants are asked to stay for the whole duration.

Division of Tasks

The Conference Chair is responsible for ensuring the quality of the scientific programme through the selection and invitation of speakers, and through the selection of participants.

The ESF Conferences Unit is responsible for managing all the logistical aspects of the conference organisation, including the provision of an on-site secretariat.

Further information: www.esf.org/conferences