

ESF RESEARCH CONFERENCES

Rapporteur Report

Partnership:	University of Barcelona
Conference Title:	Nanomedicine - Reality now and soon
Dates:	23.10.2010 - 27.10.2010
Chair:	Prof. Dr. Gert Storm
Rapporteur:	Dr. Dr. Twan Lammers

General Comments

Any general comments you might have concerning the conference, your role, the scientific area covered by this conference, etc.

- In general, the conference was well organized, and properly addressed the current state-of-the-art in the nanomedicine field.
- The majority of the speakers were very well known scientists, and leaders in their respective fields. For obvious reasons, however, i.e. because it was an ESF conference, not many speakers from the US and Asia attended, with the exception of Prof. Dr. Allen (Vancouver), Prof. Dr. LaBaer (Tucson), Prof. Dr. Gabizon (Jerusalem), Prof. Dr. Maysinger (Toronto) and Dr. Paknikar (Agharkar), who all five gave inspiring talks, and who definitely contributed to the success of the conference. For future meetings, it is therefore strongly recommended to continue inviting and involving (several; up to 10) leading scientists from the US and Asia, not in the last place because these people have a good knowledge of what is going on in clinics, markets and regulatory authorities outside of Europe.
- In several (many) cases, there was not sufficient time for discussion after the lectures. After the end of the lectures, often only 2 or 3 people were given the chance to ask questions and/or make comments, and then the respective chairs indicated that we needed to move because of time. This in spite of the fact that after several lectures, there were at least 5 or 6 people indicating they wanted to ask or add something. In my opinion, in future meetings, efforts should be put in allowing more time for discussion, since especially for young people, the things that come up and the points that are raised during the discussion are often as useful as the talks themselves. To achieve this goal, either less or shorter talks should be planned per session, or the chairs should be told to be somewhat more flexible with regard to time when more people want to ask or add something.
- Related to the above: the program was very full, running from 8:30 in the morning until 22:30 in the evening. I personally did not have much problems with this, but I have heard from others that they considered this to be too long. In the future, it might therefore be wise to either include somewhat less talks (or somewhat shorter talks), or to make the conference one day longer.
- The poster venue was not very appropriate. It may have been advantageous to have the posters in the hall in which the lectures were held, but the space between two posters really was not sufficient for enabling proper poster viewing / discussion.

Quality of Scientific Programme, Presentations and Discussion

Comments on the balance and scope of the scientific programme, the scientific quality of the presentations and discussions.

- The scientific programme was very good, i.e. a good mix of topics, several excellent speakers, and several stimulating discussions. As mentioned above, however, some of the discussions needed to be stopped in the interest of time, which was a pity, and which should be prevented in future conferences.
- Regarding the mix of topics: the chair of the conferences has assured that all relevant areas in the nanomedicine field were covered, including e.g. an excellent 'setting the scene' session, in which two highly respected scientists reflected their views on nanomedicines in general and on gene delivery. Other sessions focused on novel nanomaterials, on nano-imaging, on tissue repair and engineering, on EC and regulatory issues, and on nanomedicine formulations on the market and in clinical practice. In most of these sessions, speakers with much expertise in these areas of research and with an excellent track record delivered the talks. In addition to this, there were several guest lectures, including e.g. a talk by Beat Loeffler from the CiiNaM foundation, and by Prof. Dr. Huub Schellekens from Utrecht University, who shared his thought-stimulating and somewhat provocative viewpoints on pharmaceutical innovation,
- Relatively little attention was devoted to antibody-drug conjugates, which according to the definition definitely are nanomedicines, and which have made significant progress clinically. In future conferences, this should be kept in mind.

Informal Networking and Exchange; Atmosphere

Was the schedule and the atmosphere conducive to an easy exchange of information? Was there time and space for an informal discussion? Were younger researchers integrated?

- The atmosphere was very good, and all speakers were easily approachable and willing to share their viewpoints with young scientists. Not all speakers were able to stay for the whole period of the meeting, which was a pity, but this can likely be explained by the very busy schedule these people have.
- During lunch and dinner, and during the breaks in the afternoon, there was ample time for informal discussion. After the lectures, however, as already mentioned above, there could / should have been more time for discussion.
- There was a good mix of young and old (experienced) scientists. The young scientists were integrated well in the discussions.

Balance of Participants

Was there an appropriate balance between young and senior participants? Was a balance of national groups and researchers from different (sub)fields achieved?

- As mentioned above, there was a good mix of old and young scientist, and also of short and long talks, thereby fostering discussions and enabling active networking. The venue for the poster session was suboptimal, which may have hampered an intense discussion of young researchers with experienced scientists. To stimulate the exchange between junior and senior participants, especially with regard to the work done by the young scientists (i.e. that presented on their posters), it is strongly suggested to try to improve the poster venue. In addition, it might be good to give the presenters of the 3 or 5 best posters the opportunity to present their work in the form a short oral presentation.
- The balance between national groups and different (sub)fields was excellent. Many different nationalities attended the conference and lectures were delivered by people with a very diverse scientific background. The conference consequently very nicely mirrored the diversity and the interdisciplinarity of the nanomedicine field.

Outlook and Future Developments

Will new collaborations emerge from this conference? (How) could the conference outcomes be utilized further? Are there suitable (ESF) programmes or instruments to further the work of the conference?

- It is difficult for me to judge whether any novel collaborations have emerged from the conference. The setup for achieving this in my opinion was excellent, but I do not know whether this has actually been the case.
- The chair of the conference, i.e. Prof. Dr. Gert Storm, on several occasions announced that he was asked by the European Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences to edit a theme issue based on work presented during the conference. I do not know the current status of this, but I assume that such an issue will appear somewhere in the near future.
- Related to the above, I (together with Prof. Dr. Wim Hennink, Prof. Dr. Thomas Kissel and Prof. Dr. Stefaan de Smedt) will be editing a theme issue for the Journal of Controlled Release on 'drug delivery research in Europe', which is supposed to be coming out somewhere at the end of next year. Attending the ESF conference has enabled me to directly contact and detailedly discuss contributions with several leading European drug delivery scientists, which I considered to be highly helpful, and which will very likely contribute substantially to the quality and the impact of the theme issue.

Follow-up

What immediate and long term follow-up would benefit collaborations and dialogues that may have begun at the conference?

- E.g.: A one-day workshops for young scientists, immediately after the end of the main meeting, in which the 10-15 best poster presenters will be enabled to give short lectures. In addition, ESF-based follow-up meetings could be organized as part of other European and international meetings, such as the CRS and the AAPS meeting.

Organisation and Infrastructure

Were venue, catering and accommodation appropriate for this conference? Were participants satisfied with the on-site administration and support?

- Overall, the conference venue was nice and appropriate. One disadvantage may have been the difficulty of reaching the venue from Barcelona airport. Catering and rooms were also appropriate. On-site (ESF-) administration and support were excellent.

Summary & Overall Assessment

Was the conference successful; were its aims achieved?

- In my personal opinion, and in that of the people that I talked to after the meeting, the conference was definitely a success. Under the subtitle "Nanomedicine - Reality Now and Soon", the conference primarily aimed to "provide detailed understanding and discuss the clinical utility of those areas of nanomedicine which are close to application or already clinically applied/on the market". Excellent talks by excellent scientists have assured that this goal has been more than met, and that those that attended are 'now' fully aware of the 'current reality' in this area of research. Therefore, I and with me likely many others very much look forward to next ESF conference on Nanomedicine, and I sincerely hope it will take place somewhere 'soon'.

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