

ESF RESEARCH CONFERENCES

Rapporteur Report

Partnership:	University of Barcelona (UB): ESF-UB Conferences (Biomedicine)
Conference Title:	Pharmacogenetics and Pharmacogenomics
Dates:	06-11 June 2010
Chair:	Laurent Becquemont, Paris, France
Rapporteur:	Prof. Carsten Carlberg, Luxembourg

General Comments

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

This conference focussed on the Clinical aspects of Pharmacogenetics and had many detailed presentations and discussions on presently used drugs and the pharmacogenetic tests related to them. So, there were more discussions of individual genes, enzymes and drugs and less on the second aspect, Pharmacogenomics. Although the latter may be more the future perspective, the participants, at least the medical doctors within them, seem to appreciate the Pharmacogenetics focus of the conference.

I am trained as a biochemist and molecular biologist and my present focus is computational biology and systems biology. My research is not exactly focussed on Pharmacogenetics or Pharmacogenomics, but some of my projects on regulatory SNPs are going into this direction. From my own reserach perspective I was a bit disappointed about the rather traditional (i.e. state-of-the-art) topics and lacked a bit more future oriented topics.

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.

As addressed above, the conference was focussed more on Pharmacogenetics than on Pharmacogenomics, although a few invited speakers covered also the latter aspect. Judged on the topics of the short presentations and posters this Pharmacogenetic focus was in line with the participants present projects, i.e. apparently very appropriate for them. Most presentations, keynote lectures as well as short presentations obtained a fairly large number of questions, ie. There was lively discussions. This applied also for the poster sessions. All participants, whom I asked, were satisfied with the scientific quality of the conference and enjoyed it. The origin of the invited speakers as well of the rather larger number short talks was rather well balanced, although a reasonable number came from France and UK (the home countries of the organizer and co-organizer).

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 of the conference was very relaxed and the large number of coffee breaks, joint breakfast, lunch and dinner gave many occasions for discussions between the participants. Since most participants stayed until the final end of the conference, everyone should have had the chance to discuss with any other participant. Moreover, the two poster sessions gave the chance for further scientific discussions. Younger researchers were well integrated, a number of them gave short talks or had posters and the invited speakers were most of the time available.

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?

There was a good balance between younger and senior scientists and the younger scientists had a number of possibilities to present their own work and to start discussions with other participants. The location of the conference favored participants from Spain and France, so that less younger scientists came from geographically more distant countries. As already mentioned above, participants with a pharmacogenetics background were in larger majority to those with a pharmacogenomics background.

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?

There was the clear will of the organizers and other senior scientist to better develop an European network in Clinical Pharmacogenetics (and Pharmacogenomics) and it can be expected that respective network grants will be applied from ESF and the EU. However, there was no clear consensus, whether the networking should result mainly in meetings and discussions or already in joint scientific projects. Since the latter will require larger volumes of grants, future will show whether this network is competitive with other scientific fields for the limited resources.

Follow-up

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

As mentioned above, the conference will result in future joint applications of senior scientists for networking grants. For sure, these people should meet again on a regular basis. Therefore, further repetitions of the conference should be considered.

Organisation and Infrastructure

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

The venue, catering and accommodation were perfect, in more than 25 years of attending conferences, I cannot recall a better place for a conference. The hotel was rather isolated, which made it difficult to participants to "escape". I did not hear about any participant's complaints.

Summary & Overall Assessment

Was the conference successful; were its aims achieved?

I consider the conference as a success. Younger and senior scientists were brought together at a very pleasant venue, there was much discussion and further network grant applications and collaborations will result from this. The latter was one aim of the conference. Also the other aim of the conference, training and integration of young scientists was well achieved.