

ICOPA XI - POST CONGRESS REPORT

The eleventh international conference of parasitology was held in Glasgow, UK in August 2006.

This report is published on the WFP website both to inform the delegates at ICOPA XI and for reference for future congress organizers.

The first factual section was collated by Meeting Makers, Glasgow, while the second section is an edited copy of a report to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation from the British Society for Parasitology.

Section 1: Conference Statistics

Summary

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|---|------|
| Total Congress delegates, speakers and sponsors | 2321 |
| Accompanying Guests | 146 |
| Exhibitor Representatives | 50 |
| <hr/> | |
| Total | 2517 |

Breakdown of Delegates by Country

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Total number of Countries represented | 106 |
|---------------------------------------|-----|

| Country | Number of pre-registered delegates |
|--------------|------------------------------------|
| Algeria | 1 |
| Argentina | 10 |
| Australia | 98 |
| Austria | 10 |
| Bahrain | 1 |
| Bangladesh | 1 |
| Belarus | 1 |
| Belgium | 13 |
| Belize | 1 |
| Bhutan | 1 |
| Brazil | 39 |
| Bulgaria | 8 |
| Burkina Faso | 1 |
| Cameroon | 13 |
| Canada | 47 |
| Chile | 7 |
| China | 18 |
| Colombia | 3 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Croatia | 2 |
| Cuba | 5 |
| Czech Republic | 24 |
| Denmark | 27 |
| Dominica | 3 |
| Ecuador | 1 |
| Egypt | 25 |
| El Salvador | 1 |
| Estonia | 3 |
| Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) | 1 |
| Finland | 5 |
| France | 61 |
| Gabon | 3 |
| Georgia | 1 |
| Germany | 65 |
| Ghana | 18 |
| Greece | 1 |
| Guinea | 1 |
| Haiti | 1 |
| Honduras | 1 |
| Hungary | 3 |
| Iceland | 1 |
| India | 23 |
| Indonesia | 2 |
| Iran | 125 |
| Ireland | 15 |
| Israel | 15 |
| Italy | 36 |
| Japan | 80 |
| Kenya | 7 |
| Latvia | 1 |
| Libya | 1 |
| Lithuania | 1 |
| Macedonia | 2 |
| Malawi | 1 |
| Malaysia | 5 |
| Mali | 4 |
| Mexico | 82 |
| Mongolia | 2 |
| Morocco | 10 |
| Nepal | 1 |
| Netherlands | 18 |
| New Zealand | 10 |
| Niger | 2 |
| Nigeria | 30 |

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Norway | 12 |
| Oman | 4 |
| Pakistan | 4 |
| Palestine | 1 |
| Panama | 2 |
| Peru | 6 |
| Poland | 21 |
| Portugal | 23 |
| Puerto Rico | 2 |
| Qatar | 2 |
| Republic of Moldova | 1 |
| Romania | 6 |
| Russian Federation | 12 |
| Saint Kitts and Nevis | 1 |
| Saudi Arabia | 4 |
| Senegal | 4 |
| Singapore | 2 |
| Slovakia | 12 |
| Slovenia | 2 |
| South Africa | 14 |
| South Korea | 31 |
| Spain | 34 |
| Sri Lanka | 4 |
| Sudan | 11 |
| Sweden | 14 |
| Switzerland | 60 |
| Taiwan | 3 |
| Tanzania | 12 |
| Thailand | 20 |
| Turkey | 12 |
| Uganda | 4 |
| Ukraine | 1 |
| United Arab Emirates | 2 |
| United Kingdom | 685 |
| United States | 55 |
| Uruguay | 2 |
| Uzbekistan | 7 |
| Venezuela | 18 |
| Vietnam | 2 |
| Yugoslavia | 1 |
| Zaire | 1 |
| Zambia | 4 |
| Zimbabwe | 4 |

Breakdown of Scientific Programme

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|---|------|
| Number of accepted Oral Presentations | 576 |
| Number of accepted Poster Presentations | 1470 |
| Keynote / Invited Speaker abstracts | 271 |
| <hr/> | |
| Total number of abstracts | 2317 |

Breakdown of Social Events (numbers attending)

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|-----------------------------|------|
| Welcome Reception | 1650 |
| Civic Reception | 2000 |
| Congress Dinner | 620 |
| VIP / Speaker's Bluu Party | 500 |
| Young Parasitologists Party | 451 |

Sponsorship

Fireflower (£3,000)
 Trends in Parasitology (TIP)
 Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (RSTMH)
 Pfizer Animal Health
 Glaxo Smith Kline – Rixensaart (E10,000)
 Glaxo Smith Kline - £13,000 received
 DWQR
 New England Biolabs (\$1200)
 Ovamed
 Intervet International
 Invitrogen
 Novartis (CH 10,000)
 TCS
 University of Salford
 Blackwell Publishing
 CUP

Exhibition Statistics

Stand Number

15
 18
 02
 11
 07
 04
 05
 01
 12
 06
 09

Company

Australian Society for Parasitology
 Brazil Society for Parasitology
 BSP
 Cambridge University Press
 DiaSys Europe Limited
 Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative
 Elsevier
 Fireflower Systems
 Inverness Medical
 Jencons
 Maney Publishing

| | |
|----|--|
| 14 | McGill University |
| 17 | Mexican Society of Parasitology |
| 08 | Millipore (UK) Ltd |
| 16 | Milteny Biotec |
| 03 | Sanofi-Aventis Groupe |
| 13 | TCS Biosciences Ltd |
| 19 | Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau |
| 10 | The Wellcome Trust |

Section 2: Conference Report

Excerpts from the report from the British Society for Parasitology to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Courtesy Dr John Jones).

Background to Report`

An ICOPA is convened every four years by the World Federation of Parasitologists (WFP). The aim of these meetings is to bring together parasitologists from many different life and research experiences, from all over the world, to facilitate exchange of information and to encourage and support the establishment of collaborative projects. The British Society for Parasitology (BSP) won the bid to host ICOPA XI in Glasgow in 2006. We hoped to provide a forum for the presentation and discussion of new research pertaining to parasitic diseases that impact on global health and to integrate these discussions within the context of wider aspects of parasite transmission and veterinary and wild life diseases. ICOPA XI also provided a forum for presentation of the most up- to-date results from several programs funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation including the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative (SCI), the Gates Malaria Partnership (GMP) and the Lymphatic Filariasis elimination programme (GAELF), with data from researchers in each of these areas presented in consecutive sessions held on one day of the meeting. In addition, we recognised that a conference of this magnitude provided an opportunity for Parasitology to be promoted to a wider audience. With this in mind we organized a display of posters detailing the contribution of Scottish Parasitologists to the development of the discipline. These posters were displayed in the Glasgow Science centre prior to the congress. Two evenings of public lectures were also arranged to take place during the congress. The purpose of the grant from the Gates Foundation was to help support a minimum of 10 senior scientists, 90 young researchers, and 3 keynote speakers from resource-poor countries affected by serious parasitic diseases such as malaria, leishmaniasis, filariasis and schistosomiasis to attend ICOPA XI.

The Conference

ICOPA XI was held in Glasgow from 6th-11th August 2006 and attracted a total of 2,517 delegates, invited speakers and commercial attendees from all corners of the globe. Almost 10% of the attendees received financial support to attend the meeting from the bursary scheme

funded by this grant, the WFP or the BSP, making it one of the most accessible ICOPA meetings in recent times. All planned conference activities took place as expected and as outlined in the original proposal.

Scientific highlights of the meeting included an opening address from Lord Robert May of Oxford, former chief scientific advisor to the UK government and president of the Royal Society, the UK equivalent of the National Academy for Sciences, who spoke on the theme of "Parasites, People and Policy". Plenary lecturers and topics included Kevin Marsh (Malaria Immunity), Monique Capron (Schistosome Vaccines), George Cross (Antigenic Variation in Trypanosomes), Robert Poulin (Parasite Ecology), Pat Nuttall (Ectoparasite Vaccines) and Robin Gasser (Parasite Genomics and Genetics). In addition a number of special Symposia were held during the meeting including the Genetics Society Symposium on the Genetics of Malaria at which David Wetherall gave the annual Mendel Lecture. A series of sessions on "Parasites and Poverty" including an assessment of the topic in relation to the millennium development goals was held on the first day of the meeting. The BSP Autumn Symposium was incorporated into ICOPA and tackled the topic of "Parasites and Pregnancy".

Much of the second day of ICOPA was given over to a "Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Symposium". This comprised a series of consecutive sessions in the Clyde Auditorium in which progress achieved in the funded programmes on Malaria, Lymphatic Filariasis, Schistosomiasis and Hookworms was discussed.

Groups funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation used the opportunity provided by ICOPA to meet informally to plan subsequent activities associated with their own programmes. In the case of the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative (SCI) several of the partners participated in sessions geared towards enhancing the global effort on the research and control of schistosomiasis. In particular, they participated in a meeting on the 'Schistosomiasis Agenda'. The 'agenda' is contained in a draft document prepared in consultation with the schistosomiasis community outlining the areas considered to be important for further research and control in the coming years. WHO representatives attended the 'Schistosomiasis Agenda' to discuss the draft document thus ensuring WHO are fully informed of the views of the Schistosomiasis community. In addition, ICOPA delegates associated with the SCI participated in a meeting held in London prior to ICOPA to discuss and plan integration of the control of Neglected Tropical Diseases.

Three of the most dynamic program managers presented different perspectives on Lymphatic Filariasis programs in Tanzania, Burkina Faso and Haiti: Drs. Dominique Kyelem (Burkina Faso), Marie Denise Milord (Haiti) and Mwele Malecela (Tanzania). Dr. Malecela was not able to attend and Dr. Charles Mackenzie (Michigan State University) spoke about the program in Tanzania in her place. All three speakers were able to highlight the catalytic role that the Gates funding has played in the development of the filariasis elimination programs and the impressive health dividends that are coming from this investment.

Presentations from the five malaria programmes demonstrated the value and synergistic effects obtainable by focusing large-scale collaborative and consortium activities - in this case respectively on control, vaccines, drug development, intermittent treatment and vector control.

The planned activities aimed at enhancing public understanding of science (PUS) were an outstanding success. The two evenings of public lectures attracted many hundreds of people, and were not limited to delegates of ICOPA. The lectures were publicized to all schools in the Glasgow area, with teachers and other education professionals encouraged to attend. The lectures on the Tuesday evening covered parasites themselves and were presented by Phil Craig (Tapeworms: the X-files) and Andrew Read (Malaria: A global and evolutionary challenge). On the Thursday evening the idea of using parasites in novel treatments was explored by Anne Cooke (Have we won the war to lose the peace?) and Robert Summers (Helminth ova therapy: a new approach to the therapy of inflammatory bowel disease). Both sessions were chaired by Dame Bridget Ogilvie, a past president of BSP and former Director of the Wellcome Trust.

Invited Speakers

Three keynote speakers from resource-poor countries were selected for funding from this grant. Shyam Sundar (India) spoke on treatment options for visceral Leishmaniasis, highlighting problems with currently available treatments and making a case for combinational therapy in which short courses of several different drugs are provided at minimal cost to recipients. Ana Flisser (Mexico) provided an update on the development of laboratory models for the human tapeworm *Taenia solium* and also chaired a session on the biology of cestode infections. Finally, Alberto Carlos Frasch (Argentina) spoke about post-transcriptional regulation of gene expression in Trypanosomes.

Bursaries

Following the award of the grant from the Foundation the bursary scheme was advertised on the BSP and ICOPA web sites. A large number of applications for this scheme were received and the following criteria were used by an ad hoc committee made up of members of the Council of the BSP in deciding whether or not to award a bursary. First, the applicant had to have submitted an abstract that had been accepted as genuine and of relevance to the meeting by the Glasgow University scientists allocated to perform this task. Second, only applicants from resource-poor countries were considered for funding. Although defining a list of such countries is difficult, in practice this simply meant declining applications from people based in more wealthy countries such as Australia, the USA and Western Europe. Finally, we gave priority to workers at the early stage of their careers who had no access to funds from other sources. Each of the committee members assessed the applications individually and final decisions were made after a meeting of the committee in February 2006. All bursary recipients made oral or poster presentations at the meeting and, in total, 122 people from 41 different countries were awarded bursaries covering their full costs of attending ICOPA. Although the scheme was oversubscribed, we were able to offer bursaries to all applicants at the early stage of their careers from resource poor countries who had submitted abstracts approved as genuine by the conference organizers. The large numbers of bursaries awarded meant that more of the grant from the Foundation was spent on bursaries than was originally planned. However, it was felt that spending the money in this way, rather than on indirect costs, was in keeping with the spirit of the grant and enhanced our ability

to achieve the objectives that we originally set out.

We aimed to make attending ICOPA as simple as possible for the bursary holders. Each bursary holder was therefore registered for the conference and payment was made directly to the conference organizers by BSP. Similarly, accommodation for all bursary holders was booked in the Glasgow Queen Margaret Halls of residence and payment for this accommodation was made directly by BSP on behalf of the bursars. For travel funds, bursars were given two options. Payment was either made in advance of the meeting by bank transfer into the account of their Institution or a refund in travelers cheques was provided at ICOPA itself. In all cases bursars were required to provide copies of receipts indicating expenditure on travel of above the amount awarded. These receipts are currently being held by the BSP Secretariat. Each bursar was also provided with a cash payment of £110 (\$210) to cover meals and transport while in Glasgow.

The grant from the Foundation allowed us to overcome one of the most substantial challenges facing the organizers of a conference of this scale – how to make the conference accessible to researchers from all over the world, particularly those actually engaged in performing research at the bench. The costs of registration, travel and accommodation can be substantial and can make it almost impossible for many to attend. The grant from the Foundation enabled students and researchers from resource-poor countries to attend the meeting and ensured that a blend of scientists at all stages of their careers were present.

Feedback

No formal feedback was sought from delegates at the meeting itself. However, staff at BSP, the University of Glasgow and Meeting Makers (the congress organizers) have received numerous unsolicited emails expressing positive feelings about the meeting. Many people at the meeting itself were extremely complimentary about the scientific programme and the organization of the meeting. All of the bursary recipients expressed the view that they would not have been able to attend ICOPA without the support received from the Foundation, with many describing the opportunity to attend the meeting as a once in a lifetime experience.

After the meeting the WFP sent an email to all delegates inviting feedback and comments on the meeting, with the aim of assisting the organizers of the next ICOPA in Australia. While fewer than 10% of delegates have responded to this request for feedback to date, the overwhelming majority of responses have been positive. The few negative comments received mainly concerned the high costs of the meeting, the level and type of catering, and the physical inadequacy of certain rooms. However, it must be assumed that a significant majority of delegates were at least satisfied. It should be noted that the current strength of Sterling with subsequent adverse exchange rates has not helped delegates from overseas.

Organisation

Organising ICOPA XI presented a number of logistical and organizational challenges. A coherent and wide-ranging scientific programme had to be put together and presentations from over 90 invited speakers had to be timetabled. Sponsorship for the conference needed to be attracted in order to ensure that the meeting did not make a financial loss. A panel of scientists associated

with the BSP and the University of Glasgow worked with a professional conference organizer (Meeting Makers) in order to plan the conference. This group was successful in attracting the sponsorship required for the meeting to be financially viable and in putting together a programme of sessions and speakers that was sufficiently attractive to encourage over 2,500 delegates to attend the meeting.

Publications and Post-Conference Publicity

Knowledge Transfer activities stimulated by ICOPA are planned to continue. A series of public lectures on Parasitology topics will be held across the UK in the coming 12 months. The poster display generated for ICOPA has already been on display at the International Science Fair in Orkney. It will be displayed at a science festival in Aberdeen for 1 week from 30th September 2006 and at the Edinburgh International Science Festival in April 2007. Talks on potential therapeutic uses of parasite immune suppressors will be presented at both these meetings. Plans are also underway to hold similar lectures at the British Association Festival of Science in York in September 2007 and at the BSP Spring meeting in Belfast in April 2007.

A special issue of Trends in Parasitology has been published, highlighting work funded by the Foundation. This special issue was stimulated by the "Gates Day" held during ICOPA. A PDF file of this issue (trends in Parasitology special issue.pdf) has been submitted by email with this report. A booklet containing the information presented on the "Scottish Encounter" poster display associated with ICOPA has been produced and was distributed to ICOPA delegates and people attending the open PUS lectures at ICOPA. A PDF file of this booklet (booklet.pdf) has been submitted by email with this report.

Further publications may also arise from ICOPA. Medimond scientific publishers have offered all presenters at ICOPA the opportunity to have articles on the topic of what they presented at ICOPA published in "Proceedings" books. One book has already been published (11th International Congress of Parasitology: International Proceedings (2006) Medimond ISBN 88-7587-272-4) and contributions for a second volume are currently being sought.

[LH Chappell](#)

Secretary, WFP Executive Board

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