

5th ICEMHP Report (Antalya, Turkey)

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The Vth International Conference on Environmental Mutagens in Human Populations, May 20 – 24, 2007 was successfully completed in Antalya, Turkey. The conference was attended by approximately 200 participants, representing 34 countries (Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, India, Iran, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Nigeria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, South Korea, Switzerland, Thailand, The Philippines, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America). Forty of the participants from developing countries received fellowships from the organizers to the conference. The success of the conference was due to the cumulated effort from many dedicated individuals during the last four years. These individuals include the co-chairs (Dr. William Au of USA, and Dr. Semra Sardas and Dr. Ali Karakaya of Turkey), the Secretary General (Dr. Bensu Karahalil) and their Local Organizing Committee. In addition, the International Advisory Board (Dr. Michael Waters, Wagida Anwar, Stefano Bonassi, Sema Burgaz, Malyn Chulasiri, Henry Falk, Michael Fenech, James Gentile, Hikoya Hayatsu, Taisei Nomura, Patricia Ostrosky, Lucia Ribeiro, Leona Sampson, Radim Sram and Michael Wilhelm) provided the valuable guidance and continued support. The conference could not have been carried out without the generous support from the sponsors: Coordinating Center for Environmental Health and Injury Prevention of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Environmental Mutagen Society, European Environmental Mutagen Society, International Association of Environmental Mutagen Society, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, Novartis Pharmaceutical Company, Research Corporation, Sealy Center for Environmental Health and Medicine and the University of Texas Medical Branch, The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey, and the Turkish Society of Toxicology.

The outstanding scientific program in the conference was owed to the valuable presentations from world-renowned scientists. These scientists were engaged in keynote addresses, and symposium and workshop presentations. The keynote speakers included Her Royal Highness Professor Doctor Princess Chulabhorn, President of the Chulabhorn Research Institute of Thailand; Dr. William Suk, Directors of Center for Risk and Integrated Sciences, and Superfund Basic Research Program of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences; and Dr. Peter Briss, Scientific Director of the Coordinating Center for Environmental Health and Injury Prevention of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The overall objective of the conference was to provide environmental health knowledge and expertise to scientists in countries where environmental health concerns have not been adequately addressed. Therefore, the participation of scientists from 34 countries, especially those from developing countries is a clear indication of the attractive value of

the conference. Indeed, the scientific program was organized to specifically address the conference objective. The program included presentations from addressing the basic mechanisms of mutagenesis and toxicology, to epidemiological investigations on health issues, to the translation of scientific knowledge into public health services, and to the building of environmental health infrastructure through science, education and outreach effort. A delegation of Turkish scientists presented their knowledge of local environmental health issues and ongoing solutions to their concerns. In addition, the conference is officially acknowledged by the Ministry of Health, and the Minister of Culture and Tourism of Turkey.

The conference scientists interacted actively with each other to enrich their learning experience during the conference. In addition, 80 posters were presented to show case the knowledge and expertise of the participants. These posters were evaluated by four invited speakers for their scientific merits. They were Dr. Wagida Anwar of Egypt, Dr. Sema Burgas of Turkey, Dr. Arthur Frank of USA and Dr. Michael Wilhelm of Germany. These judges were impressed by the high quality of the posters and three were chosen to receive awards for their highest merits. The third place award went to Irena Hreljac of Slovenia who presented her work on “Cogenotoxicity of methyl parathion and benzo(a) pyrene”. The second place award went to Esra Emerce of Turkey who presented “*hOGG1* SER326CYS polymorphism and lung cancer susceptibility in a Turkish population”. The first place award went to Panida Navasumrit of Thailand who presented “Increased genotoxicity and expression of *CYP2E1*, *XRCC1* and *hOGG1* in styrene exposed workers”.

The monograph which will contain manuscripts from the invited speakers to the conference is being prepared. It will be published in Mutation Research Review. From the generous contribution from the publisher, Elsevier Science, copies of the monograph will be distributed for free to the registered participants.

A unique feature of the series of five international conferences is that the organizers are fully responsible for any possible financial shortfall of the conference. The evidence indicates that the willingness of the organizers to take on the risk in organizing the conference is due to two important factors: their love for environmental health sciences and their desire to bring international scientists to their beloved countries. Therefore, the organizers are particularly thankful to the sponsors and to the invited speakers who provide their own travel support to the conference.

From the comments from the invited speakers and the participants, it is clear that the conference objective was fulfilled. Everyone has fully enjoyed the conference by receiving highly valuable scientific and social experience.