

Preface

Special issue: Molecular and Cellular Biology of Helminth Parasites XI

The conference series **Molecular and Cellular Biology of Helminth Parasites** was initiated in Edinburgh in 1997, but since 2002 has been held on the Greek island of Hydra, and is now an annual event which features the latest developments across the full range of research on helminths. The conference provides a regular focal point for discussion and collaboration, particularly important given the rapid advancements in the field. The 2017 conference was no exception, and was opened by a keynote lecture from Klaus Brehm (University of Würzburg, Germany), who gave an illuminating presentation, employing a multidisciplinary approach to illustrate how the cancer-like proliferation of the *Echinococcus multilocularis* metacestode is driven by somatic stem cells. Twelve thematic sessions followed, covering areas as diverse as developmental biology, metabolism and drug development, immunity in vectors and model organisms such as *C. elegans*, and a plethora of host-parasite molecular interactions underlying immunomodulation and pathogenesis. Exploitation of genomic, transcriptomic and proteomic information, and application of new technologies is bringing a new generation of therapeutic approaches, and revealing much more about the intricate adaptations of these remarkable organisms.

As always, the conference was held at the Bratsera Hotel, although this year poster sessions were scheduled on the rooftop terrace of the Museum of Hydra (pictured). Travel bursaries for early-career researchers from endemic countries were also introduced, making the meeting more accessible to a new group of scientists and giving a different dimension to the meeting. Limitation on delegate numbers allowed every participant the opportunity to present their work either via a plenary talk or poster session in a relaxed atmosphere, and we would like to thank everyone for making the meeting such a success.

Although we cannot reproduce the full range of subjects presented at the meeting, the enclosed articles, both reviews and original research submissions, give a flavour of the breadth and quality of the science. We are indebted to the Burroughs Wellcome Fund, the National Institutes of Health, and the University of Colorado School of Medicine RNA Bioscience Initiative, whose generous donations allowed

us to underwrite the meeting, invite plenary lecturers and provide bursaries for early career researchers. In addition, we are grateful to New England Biolabs and PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases for their support, the contributors and referees who acted at short notice, and Maria Meuleman and Alex Loukas for putting this special issue together so quickly and efficiently.

Murray E. Selkirk

Department of Life Sciences, Imperial College London, London SW7 2AZ, UK

Email address: m.selkirk@imperial.ac.uk

Richard E. Davis

Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Genetics, RNA Bioscience Initiative, University of Colorado School of Medicine, Aurora, Colorado 80045, USA.

Email address: Richard.Davis@ucdenver.edu

Kleoniki Gounaris

Department of Life Sciences, Imperial College London, London SW7 2AZ, UK

Email address: k.gounaris@imperial.ac.uk

Rick M. Maizels

Wellcome Centre for Molecular Parasitology, Institute of Infection, Immunology and Inflammation, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8TA, UK

Email address: Rick.Maizels@glasgow.ac.uk

