

EDITORIAL

State-of-the-art microbiology and infectious diseases during 26th ECCMID

Piotr Kochan

The 26th European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases – abbreviated and colloquially known as ECCMID is definitely the biggest such event in Europe organized annually by the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID). The original congress venue was moved from Turkey to the Netherlands. From April 9-12 in Amsterdam this year, it had a staggering number of 11,640 participants from all over the world. Attendees from 123 countries presented >3,000 abstracts, participated in over 200 sessions, 100 symposia and oral sessions, 20 educational workshops, 20 meet-the-expert sessions as well as 26 industry-organized symposia. The number of exhibitors was also amazing, amounting to 157, with state-of-the art lab machinery and apparatus, tests, assays, books and literature. With yet another record-breaking year for the organizers, the scientific community is about to show the world how to integrate beyond differences, races, religions in favour of a common goal – the good of humanity by advancing science.

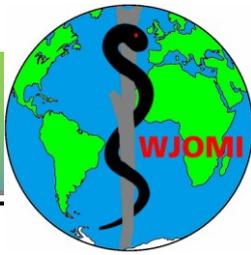
As the Editor-in-Chief of WJOMI, during the press conference held on Sunday, April 10, 2016, I was given the opportunity to talk to the

three key figures of the Congress and the Society, namely: Murat Akova, ESCMID President at the time; Mario Poljak, ESCMID President-Elect and Winfried Kern, ECCMID Programme Director.



Figure 1. Piotr Kochan, WJOMI Editor-in-Chief (*left*) together with Prof. Mario Poljak (*right*), the new President of the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID). Photo taken during the 26th ECCMID in Amsterdam, 2016.

After some formal introductions and a brief outline of the congress made by the three executive members, I had the opportunity to ask them some *ad hoc* questions:



1. Addressing Mario Poljak: “Mario, what are your prospects for underrepresented regions during your forthcoming presidency?”

Answer: “Definitive steps for improvement of representation, since Piotr and I come from the former Eastern Bloc countries, there is a big tradition of clinical microbiology there. In Slovenia for example, Clinical Microbiology has been present since at least 1925, with majority of specialists being medical doctors, unlike some other countries, where these are often represented by non-medical professions. Some effort must be placed on financial issues and support for those willing to participate in such events as ECCMID, also convincing them that continuous medical education is a lifelong task, with special emphasis placed on strengthening the relations between ESCMID and their national microbiology societies with meetings organized by local national groups.”

2. Addressing all three members: “What do you think about the project on the lump sums of money instead of profit-driven research being directed at new drug development?”

Answered by Murat Akova and Winfried Kern: “We will have to wait for any results with the EU/USA coming together to provide these working lump sums to the companies on a fast-track drug research basis to get new drug approval. It may be a good novel mechanism for producing new drugs, which as you know are very few. But we need time and yet to see the outcome.”

3. Addressing all three members individually: “What is your motto for 2016?”

Answer by Mario Poljak: “State-of-the-Art modern equipment and technological demonstrations.”

Answer by Murat Akova: “Collaboration and shared science.”

Answer by Winfried Kern: “Shared science and diagnostic revolution.”

Being very much satisfied with their answers, I witnessed some more questions being posed by fellow medical press members, many times referring to some specific topic presented during congress sessions.

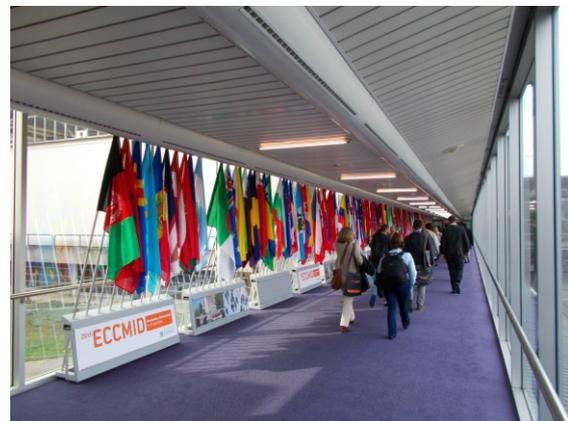


Figure 2. Flags of the 123 countries lining the corridors of the congress venue.

Two special tracks were opened for late-breaking abstracts. A total of 340 late-breaker abstracts have been submitted, 25 related to refugee health, 44 on colistin resistance, and 271 on other topics. The ECCMID Programme Committee selected the most interesting and scientifically significant abstracts to be presented in dedicated oral sessions and additional poster presentations. The late breaking sessions this year dealt with topics relevant in global scale: (i) Colistin resistance and (ii) Refugee and migrant health. The first topic presented findings on the prevalence of



the *mcr-1* gene, a transferable mechanism of antimicrobial-resistance to colistin - often the last resort antibiotic. The *mcr-1* gene is particularly significant as it can be carried by plasmids, which can be transferred between single-celled organisms, such as bacteria, through horizontal gene transfer. Horizontal gene transfer is the primary reason for antibiotic resistance. There were also information presented on the treatment and management options, as well as new diagnostic methods and assays to help identify *mcr-1*. The mechanism, first discovered in an *E. coli* strain from a pig in China in November 2015, has over the past months been identified in bacterial samples across the world. This increasing prevalence of plasmid-mediated resistance is causing major concern among infectious disease specialists, because it threatens to reduce options to treat infections and is creating new resistant bacterial strains. The second topic brought much attention as to the concept of universal screening of migrants and refugees. Despite huge interest from global and UE agencies, the screening differs from country to country and also it depends on the place where these persons come from. One of the issues of concern is the screening for TB, for example. Others included HIV, MRSA, *Salmonella*, *Shigella*, scabies, Chagas disease, etc. Last but not least, there were late-breaking result of studies evaluating novel diagnostic tools and therapies for infectious diseases, including Ebola and Zika virus.

Besides of participating as press, I was able to enjoy the many truly interesting conference scientific sessions. The one definitely worth

mentioning was the 2h symposium *Year in Clinical Microbiology* with presentations by: Luisa Maria Vieira Peixe “Novelties in clinical bacteriology: from basics to practice”, Herman Goossens “What is hot on antibiotic resistance and host biomarkers?” and Gilbert Greub “What’s new in 2015 – 2016? From diagnostic microbiology to emerging pathogens”. If you wanted to hear the novelties this was the one to attend but if you missed it – it’s still online.

Despite having ended my term and activities with the ESCMID Professional Affairs Subcommittee, I still had some active duties owing to a poster submitted to the European Networking Corner about our ESCMID Collaborative Centre no. 101, which for the last several years I coordinate in Cracow.



Figure 3. Networking corner with respective ESCMID Collaborative Centres’ posters (Polish centre is the 2nd from the left).

Observerships are scientific exchanges allowing participants from the EU and abroad, both medical doctors and other medical



professions, to get some experience from visiting clinical microbiology laboratories and/or infectious disease departments. Currently there are many Observership centres in the EU and many other continents with visits lasting usually a week to a month. ESCMID Observership centre no. 101 in Cracow is the only one in Poland. So far we had guests from Iraq-Kurdistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Sudan, India and the UK. ESCMID also made efforts for starting special Observerships to the WHO and ECDC, and also in cooperation with the American Society for Microbiology (ASM), which I myself recommended during ASM General Meeting in New Orleans in 2011 and later also in San Francisco in 2012 to the International Affairs, while serving my term as the Ambassador to the American Society for Microbiology.



Figure 4. ESCMID Collaborative Centre no. 101 poster in the Networking Corner during 2016 ECCMID [1].

Furthermore, on Sunday, April 10, 2016 I took active part in the oral session entitled: *Still thriving at the host's expense: parasitic*

infection, chaired by Peter Chiodini and Miriam José Alvarez Martinez. I was the presenter of the talk “Is there an easier way to differentiate phases of *Toxoplasma gondii* infection in pregnant women?” by Agata Pietrzyk, myself, Barbara Papir and Małgorzata Bulanda.

It's difficult to encompass so many interesting sessions in such a short time and I must regret that many times I had to choose between the topics, not being able to attend both at the same time. Luckily ESCMID gives us the opportunity to come back to many of the talks on their ECCMID website, which I included in the recommended websites, just below the text [2, 3].



Figure 5. Interesting architecture of RAI Amsterdam where the 2016 ECCMID took place.

For a full programme, educational workshops, poster presentations and oral sessions at ECCMID 2016 in Amsterdam, in the Netherlands, please visit: <http://eccmidlive.org/>



If you have any questions to the Editor-in-Chief you may address them directly to:

editors@journalofmedicalimages.com

Recommended websites:

1. ESCMID Collaborative Centre, Clinical Microbiology, Poland. 26th ECCMID Networking Corner Poster, Amsterdam 2016. Access valid on April 26, 2016:
<https://kohasso.neostrada.pl/wjomi/poster.pdf>
2. European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ECCMID). Access valid on April 26, 2016:
<http://www.eccmid.org/>
3. European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID). Access valid on April 26, 2016:
<https://www.escmid.org/>

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