



22nd Federation of Asian and Oceanian Biochemists and Molecular Biologists 2011 Conference

Phillip Nagley reports on the 22nd FAOBMB Conference held in Singapore

The 22nd FAOBMB Conference was held in Singapore, 5–7 October 2011. This was the first FAOBMB conference since 2008 that had not been held as a major meeting combined with IUBMB, as was the case for the 2009 Congress in Shanghai and the 2010 Conference in Melbourne. This variation in style and intensity each year makes each such FAOBMB meeting memorable for its distinctive ambience. Thus the smaller attendance of about 300 registrants (from 23 countries) in the Biopolis high technology precinct provided a more intimate assembly than the larger recent gatherings. The warm hospitality displayed by our hosts and the spectacular building developments in Singapore made the conference another memorable occasion.



Courtyard of the famous Raffles Hotel.



Indoor canal in the Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands.

The theme of the Conference was 'Creativity and Innovation in Life Science: Research, Enterprise and Education'. To paraphrase the conference chair, Mrs Siok Im Koh, "Research is that presented by the scientists and postgraduate students; enterprise encompasses the companies that showcase their technologies; education is the discussion of developments in teaching and learning." All these aspects were amply fulfilled throughout the three days of the conference. The proceedings were opened by Mr S. Iswaran, Minister in the Prime Minister of Singapore's Office and Second Minister for Home Affairs & Trade and Industry.

The opening plenary lecture was delivered by inaugural FAOBMB Medallist Dr Cheng-Wen Wu (National Yang-Ming University, Taiwan). His lecture on translational research of lung cancer in Taiwan encompassed an exciting compilation of clinical, epidemiological, genomic, molecular and toxicological insights into the special nature of lung cancer in this region, as distinct from the presentation and aetiology in Western countries. The theme of molecular and genomic

approaches to cancer was also reflected in the plenary lecture by Dr Edison Liu (NUS/Genome Institute of Singapore), focussing on breast cancer in context of broader aspects of cancer genomics. Other plenary lectures were delivered by Dr Andrew Wang (Academia Sinica, Taiwan) on structural biology applied to several areas of biology and medicine, Dr Henry Yang (China) on molecular genomics and systems biology, and Dr Madhuri Hegde (Emory University, USA) on novel clinical diagnostics of human genetic diseases based on genomic approaches.



FAOBMB Medallist Dr Chen-Wen Wu.

The plenary lectures were broadly reflective of the themed symposia that made up the bulk of the oral presentation program (including 80 invited speakers). There were several sessions of free oral papers mostly given by early career researchers, a refreshing inclusion in an international conference of this type. The whole program was suffused with the rubric of 'next-gen' in technical and applied contexts – this also extended nicely to the Education session entitled 'Educating the Next Generation', which dealt with many aspects of undergraduate teaching/learning and research training. FAOBMB provided 10 Travel fellowships for early career scientists to attend the Conference. The recipients came from 9 countries in the FAOBMB region.



FAOBMB Travel Fellowship Winners. From left: Siok Im Koh (Chair of 22nd FAOBMB Conference Organising Committee), Chen-Chung Lee (Taiwan), Uhtaek Oh (FAOBMB Treasurer), Adeleh Divsalar (Iran), Piamsook Pongsawasdi (FAOBMB Fellowships Chair), John de Jersey (FAOBMB Secretary General), Andrew Wang (FAOBMB President), Gavin Higgins (Australia), Marsia Gustiananda (Indonesia), Masamitsu Futai (FAOBMB Past-President), Saadia Naseem (Pakistan), Farhana Shafrin (Bangladesh), Wen-Hsin Liu (Taiwan), Sameer Dixit (Nepal) and Chanthakarn Nuchsuk (Thailand).

The Singapore Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (SSBMB), the Biomedical Research & Experimental Therapeutics Society of Singapore (BRETSS) and the Singapore Society for Microbiology and Biotechnology (SSMB) joined with FAOBMB and several other regional

and local societies in organising the conference. The local Organising Committee did a wonderful job in putting on the excellent scientific and social program. The social highlight was the Conference Dinner at Mana Mana Beach Club on the Singapore East Coast. Despite the heavy rain, all participants had a great time. The food and drink were excellent and guests were entertained by a colourful belly-dancing performance.



Phillip Nagley (left) and Yau-Huei Wei (right) get into the dancing mood.



Dancers with FAOBMB colleagues.

FAOBMB Council

Council of FAOBMB met on 4 October 2011. The annual meeting brings together the delegates from the FAOBMB region, together with the Executive (that meets twice a year) and a series of local and international observers. The Executive of Council was confirmed for 2012 with two new faces as Phillip Nagley (incoming Secretary General, replacing John de Jersey) and Siok Im Koh (incoming Education Chair, replacing Hoon Eng Khoo).

Significant initiatives of FAOBMB, which have been recently inaugurated or are in progress for implementation in the near

future, include the FAOBMB Medal for outstanding research in this region (see conference report above), a proposed new education award, new travel fellowships for exchange visits for laboratory training between FAOBMB member countries and the establishment of an FAOBMB scientific advisory committee. An outreach program to countries in the FAOBMB region that are not yet members, or to those whose membership has lapsed, will be implemented soon.

The next FAOBMB Congress will be held in Bangkok, Thailand, 25–29 November 2012.



FAOBMB Council meeting.

Back row, from left: Chung-Eun Ha (Hawaii), Rebati Shrestha (Nepal), Uhtaek Oh (FAOBMB Treasurer, South Korea), Masamitsu Futai (FAOBMB Past-President, Japan), John de Jersey (FAOBMB Secretary General, Australia), Ming-Daw Tsai (Taiwan), Phillip Nagley (Australia), David Palmer (New Zealand), Surapong Pinitklang (Thailand), Ali Akbar Saboury (Iran), Ram Bhagavan (Honorary member, Hawaii).

Front row, from left: Siok Im Koh (Singapore, and Chair of 22nd FAOBMB Conference Organising Committee), Piamsook Pongsawasdi (FAOBMB Fellowships Chair), Pham Thi Tran Chau (Vietnam), Andrew Wang (FAOBMB President, Taiwan), Gaik Bee Lim (Secretary of 22nd FAOBMB Conference Organising Committee), Hoon Eng Khoo (FAOBMB Education Chair, Singapore).