

THE AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY FOR MICROBIOLOGY

WESTERN AUSTRALIA BRANCH NEWSLETTER

October 2005



Committee Update

By Michele Squire

Welcome to the new look ASM Western Australia Branch newsletter! As the new newsletter editor I would firstly like to extend a huge thank you to Catherine Gangell who has done an outstanding job editing the newsletter since March 2004. It is through Catherine's hard work that ASM members have been able to stay up-to-date with the branch's multitude of activities, and new developments in the field of Microbiology in WA and across Australia. On behalf of the ASM membership and committee I would like to say how very much we appreciate Catherine's dedication and wish her every success in the future.

Following the AGM on 13th October, there have also been some changes to the Western Australian Branch committee. We would like to welcome two new UWA representatives: Susannah Piek and Kristy Philippe. Susannah is currently finishing her third year of a Bachelor of Science degree at UWA, with majors in microbiology and pharmacology and a special interest in bacterial genetics. Susannah plans to do honours in microbiology in 2006, hopefully on *Neisseria meningitidis*.

Kristy Philippe is a first year PhD student within the Virology Division of the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research. Her project involves a study of the neurovirulence of enterovirus71.

For a detailed profile & contact details for the new Western Australian Branch committee please turn to the back page of this newsletter

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Kristy has been an ASM member for the past 3 years and is looking forward to getting more involved and encouraging students to further their interests in the field of microbiology.

Veronica Susai also joins the committee as a member of the Communications Team. Veronica is currently working as a graduate research assistant at the Arbovirology Research and Surveillance Laboratory at UWA. This is a surveillance laboratory monitoring mosquito-borne viruses such as Murray Valley Encephalitis and Ross River in both the north and southwest of WA. Having been a member for the ASM for many years and benefiting greatly from it, she has decided to become a committee member, and an important part of the communications team!

Remember that this is your newsletter and your contributions and feedback are important and welcome. Please contact [Michele Squire](#) or [Veronica Susai](#) if there is anything you would like to see included.

Student Careers Evening Report



Curtin University of Technology

By Tessa Vanzetti

The ASM student careers evening is an annual event that gives undergraduate students an excellent insight into employment opportunities in microbiology. The Curtin University of Technology evening was held on the 8th of August.

The guest speakers included Erik Helmerhorst from Curtin University who spoke about the directions students can take in regards to postgraduate education, Rod Bowman from PathWest Nedlands, spoke about applying for a job in the government sector and what to do when students undergo their work experience. The third speaker was Belinda Clark from PathWest (Country reliever) she spoke about the opportunities for Medical Scientists in branch laboratories throughout W.A. and what the work entails. Belinda graduated from Curtin last year, therefore the students, including myself were highly

interested in the work that she was conducting as a new scientist. The fourth speaker was Todd Pryce from PathWest Microbiology RPH, he spoke about the opportunities that a scientist can achieve during their career in a clinical microbiology laboratory. The last speaker was Jenny Green from PathWest Food and Waters. She spoke about the work conducted at the Food and Waters laboratories and the opportunities for Curtin Medical Science graduates. Following the presentations, the students and guest speakers socialized over drinks and snacks.

The event was very successful and well attended, especially by the second year students. The students asked many questions and were pleased that they were given this occasion to obtain more information about opportunities in a microbiological career.

University of Western Australia

By Rajat Hans

The student careers evening held on the 9th of August at QEII was a great success. An excellent turnout of second and third year microbiology students was hosted to an array of guest speakers informing them of the some of the options available post graduation.

Mr. Rodney Bowman of PathWest gave valuable information on securing employment. Dr. Mark Watson, a Managing Scientist at Royal Perth Hospital, advised about career paths within the area of research. Professor Graham Wilcox addressed the topic of postgraduate degree pursuits for those wishing to stay on. Ms Barbara Henderson of PathWest gave an overview of employment in public and private diagnostic companies. The closing speaker, Ms. Natalie Marchello from N. Stenning & Co., gave attendees an overview in the life of a Science salesperson.

The evening wrapped up with an opportunity for students to interact with the guest speakers over refreshments.

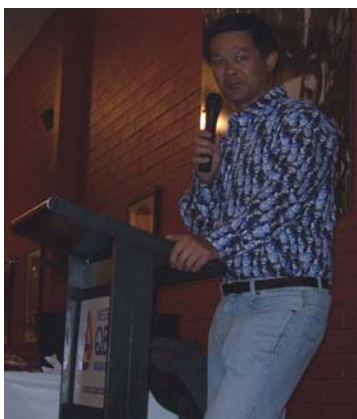
The ASM committee would like to take the opportunity to thank those who helped in the organization of this evening, with special appreciation to Ms Cora D'souza for providing the data projector, and Ms Marcia Choong for getting the message out.

The ASM-WA would like to congratulate ASM member Professor Barry Marshall and Dr Robin Warren for their outstanding efforts in being awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for their groundbreaking work on H. pylori

2005 Quiz Night Report

By Catherine Gangell

The Australian Society for Microbiology would like to thank all their members (and non-ASM members) who came along to the annual quiz night on Tuesday 13th September to raise funds for student travel awards. The evening was a great success with a record number of 33 tables present (it gets bigger every year!). This year we raised over \$2 500! Monies raised from this evening will allow selected ASM student members to attend the annual national ASM conference.



Above: Quiz master Michael Leung

The important information of the evening, of course, is – who won?! This year Histology and Cytology from Western Diagnostics won with 69 points. First prize included dinner for 8 at Trigg Island Café and 8 bottles of wine. Second

prize, which consisted of 8 bottles of wine and dinner for 8 at Amarin Thai, went to Microbiology at PathWest with 63 points. After much deliberation with a 4-way tie, Bacteriology from Western Diagnostics took out the third prize of 8 bottles of wine, with 62 points. We must also not forget last place – that went to R&D PathWest with 35 points. Ingrid Thompson won the door prize, a David Jones gift voucher.



Above: Congratulations to our winners!

Special mention needs to be made of some of the more 'creative' answers. In particular: "Name the author of 'Angel Puss'". For the record, it was not Paris Hilton.

Upcoming Events

Please put these dates in your diary...

25th October 2005

Student Awards Night

5.30pm, Seminar Room 1.1, L Block, QEII Medical Centre

6th December 2005

Around the Labs

5.30pm, MacDonald Lecture Theatre
Princess Margaret Hospital

February 2006

Guest Speaker: Bonnie Bassler

Topic: Quorum Sensing

Date & venue to be advised

March 2006

Bacterial Vaginosis Workshop

University Club of Western Australia

Date & time to be advised

2-6th July 2006

ASM 2006 National Conference

Gold Coast, Qld



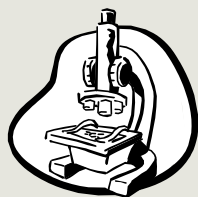
The ASM would like to extend an enormous thank you to Rebecca Wake who organised the evening and ensured everything ran so smoothly. The whole committee has been working tirelessly for the last couple of months, recruiting sponsors, prizes, tables, a venue and all the other behind the scenes work needed to make the quiz night a great success. The ASM would also like to thank the master of the quizzes, Michael Leung, as well as the markers, Nickie Barrett, Barbara Henderson, Suellen Blackaby, Phil Silvester & myself, who did a wonderful job keeping up with marking all the answers. A big thank you also to Mark Watson who computed all the scores (with his extra special computerised scoring sheet).

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Of course, the evening would not be as successful without the ongoing support of the following sponsors: Abbott, Acorn Biological, Amarin Thai, Anchor Foods, AstraZenica, Australian Laboratory Services, Becton-Dickinson, BIOMERIEUX, Bio-Rad, Blackaby Diagnostics, Cambridge Media, D'Orsogna, GE Healthcare, Interpath Services, Larry & Lyn O'Reilly, Oxoid, Pfizer, Roche Diagnostics, Subiaco Football Club, The Mousetrap, Trigg Island Café & Vasse Felix. Thank you for your continual support over the years.

We would like to thank everyone who attended this annual event. We hope you all had an enjoyable evening, and we hope to see you back next year.



THE ASTHMA & ALLERGY RESEARCH INSTITUTE IS SEEKING APPLICATIONS FOR:

PhD Top UP Scholarships

*Valued at \$7000/annum to top up income for the duration of research studies at AARI
Applications close 5pm, 28th October 2005*

AARI Travel Awards

*2 travel awards of up to \$1,500 for junior scientists and 1 award of up to \$2,500 for senior scientists to attend national/ international conferences to present original research work into asthma, allergy or respiratory disease
Applications close 25th November 2005*

Summer Undergraduate Cadetships

Scholarships of \$350/ week are available to full time medical & science undergraduate students who are interested in undertaking a supervised research project.

Applications for the 2005/6 program close 5pm, 21st October 2005

For full details on all of these awards, and application forms go to the AARI website (www.aari.uwa.edu.au) or email aari@aari.uwa.edu.au

2006 Branch Travel Awards

The 2006 ASM National Conference will be held at the Gold Coast, 2-6 July 2006. Due to this date being much earlier than usual, the closing date for Branch Travel Awards has also been brought forward.

These awards finance 3 full-time student members from each ASM branch to attend the conference. Recent graduates (ie. Graduating within the last 5 years) are also eligible for one category of award. The award consists of a return economy airfare, conference registration and accommodation allowance. Award winners must submit an abstract to conference organisers and present a paper at the meeting.

Students wishing to apply for a travel award must:

1. Be a financial member of ASM
2. Submit an abstract (less than 300 words) to the state branch selection committee
3. Submit an 800 to 1000 word summary of work capable of being understood by a lay person
4. Submit a detailed CV outlining personal details, qualifications, university grades, work/ research experience, publications, names & contact details of 3 professional referees
5. Submit a personal philosophy (less than 250 words) outlining why they wish to attend the ASM conference

Submissions and enquiries are to be directed to Professor Tom Riley (triley@cyllene.uwa.edu.au)

Closing date for applications is 16th December 2005.

If you couldn't make it to the ASM Conference this year, please join us to listen to the 2005 travel award winners, Niki Foster, Chelsea Papadopoulos & Wasantha Gunawardhana as they present their winning abstracts at the WA ASM Student Awards Night, 5.30pm, 25th October in Seminar Room 1.1, L Block, QEII.

Visiting Speakers Report

By Michele Squire

Professor John Goldsmid
*Emeritus Professor of Microbiology,
University of Tasmania*

Dr Goldsmid delivered a very entertaining talk on 'Infections from Home and Away' (and no, it had nothing to do with a popular TV series!). The 'Away' that Dr Goldsmid was referring to is Zimbabwe, where he lived for many years before relocating to Tasmania ('Home') more than 25 years ago to continue his research into zoonotic tropical infectious diseases. Unbelievably, Dr Goldsmid was able to draw parallels between the types of tropical diseases found in Africa and Tasmania and disprove the myth that tropical disease doesn't occur in Tasmania.

There were several take-home messages from this talk; the most important being that clinicians and microbiologists must be prepared for the unusual – they may be seeing the first instance of a 'home' infection from 'away' or a completely new organism. Dr Goldsmid argued that the appearance of exotic infections is increasing in Australia as a result of a global mobile population, and the influx of refugees. He also stressed the importance of taking a full travel history as this can change the whole context of diagnosis.

Dr John Coffin
*Director, HIV Drug Resistance Program,
National Cancer Institute – Frederick, Maryland*

The focus of Dr Coffin's talk was his research team's development of sensitive new assay techniques to provide new insights into the HIV-host relationship, with a view to more effective drug strategies for treating HIV.

Several new techniques have been developed, the results of which have provided increased understanding of HIV genetic diversity (in both recently infected HIV patients and those with chronic infection), drug resistance caused by specific mutations, and persistence of specific mutations in different HIV populations.

In addition, following a study of rapid rebound of the virus after cessation of antiretroviral treatment, an assay has been developed by Dr Coffin's team to detect low-level viraemia in patients, even though it may be undetectable via traditional methods. More information about these techniques can be found on Dr Coffin's website at NCI: http://www.retrovirus.info/clinical_trials.html

2006 Visiting Speakers

Negotiations are currently underway for the following speakers to visit WA in 2006 – topics and venues will be announced when itineraries are confirmed...

[Professor Henrik Wegener](#)

Danish Institute for Food & Veterinary Research

[Dr Ari Helenius](#)

Professor of Biochemistry, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich

Dr Helenius research areas are protein folding and virus-cell interactions

[Dr David Briles](#)

University of Alabama at Birmingham

Dr Briles' research focus is bacterial pathogenesis, virulence, immunity, pneumococcus, and tuberculosis

[Professor Peter Bergquist](#)

Macquarie University Biotechnology Research Institute

Professor Bergquist's expertise is in gene cloning & expression, protein-nucleic acid interactions, PCR & enzyme evolution in extremophiles

[Professor Peter Raspor](#)

Food Science & Technology Dept, University of Ljubljana

Professor Raspor is a wine yeast expert

New ASM Publications

'Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing: Methods & Practices with an Australian Perspective'

'A Compendium of Laboratory Diagnostic Methods for Common & Unusual Enteric Pathogens'

To order these publications please contact the ASM (admin@theasm.com.au)

2005 National ASM Report

By Niki Foster

Ten pens, three note pads, two cups, three drink bottles, a radio, a beanie, a glass plate and a wealth of knowledge. The 2005 ASM National Conference is now over.

What better place to have an ASM National Conference than in our Nation's capital city, Canberra, and with Floriade in full swing the city was at its most beautiful.

This year the conference again began with a number of workshops on the Sunday, followed by the official opening and awards ceremony later that evening. The next four days were filled with quality presentations from both international and Australian speakers, covering a variety of issues in Microbiology, explorative and diagnostic. We were also exposed to the latest technologies in this rapidly advancing field. Morning and afternoon teas were spent perusing the impressive trade and poster displays. There was a good student turnout this year, represented in poster presentations as well as several proffered paper presentations.

The social functions provided the opportunity to catch up with colleagues, meet with presenters and discuss the interesting topics covered throughout the conference. The Roche dinner in the Great Hall of new Parliament House was a hit with fantastic food and interesting entertainment enjoyed by all. "In vivo Las Vegas" won't be forgotten in a hurry. It was great to see everyone mingling and partying on the dance floor.

Overall, the venue was impressive, the workshops were inspiring and the presentations were informative and of high quality. ASM2005 was a credit to the organising committee. We are all looking forward to ASM2006.

Gold Coast here we come!

WA Branch AGM Report

By Veronica Susai

This year's AGM was held at the recently refurbished UWA Microbiology Seminar room. It was an evening of enlightening and gastronomical delight. Our chairperson, Suellen Blackaby began the business part of the meeting with the chairperson's and treasurer's reports, followed by the election of office bearers and new committee members.

Once these proceedings were completed, the evening's guest speaker, Dr Stuart Bunt (Scientific Director), enthralled us with a presentation of the unique work carried out by SymbioticA, the Art and Science Collaborative Research Laboratory at UWA. From fungi incorporated dresses to pig wings, music-encoded plasmids to tissue-engineered frog steaks, SymbioticA enables artists and scientists to explore scientific knowledge together from an artistic point of view. It attempts to push the boundaries of today's Science while exploring the endless possibilities of what Science can do in the future. Bizarre for some, intriguing for others, it was yet another wonderful presentation for all those who attended this year's AGM.

More information about SymbioticA can be found on the website: <http://www.symbiotica.uwa.edu.au>

The Australian Institute of Medical Scientists (AIMS) developed the APACE (Australian Professional Acknowledgement of Continuing Education) scheme in 1998 to formally recognise and document continuing education & professional development in a standardised way.

This program is a self-driven assessment & submission scheme that allows members to accumulate continuing education credit points, eventually gaining APACE certification.

ASM has recently joined this program and members are eligible to participate in APACE.

For more details please go to the APACE website:

<http://www.aims.org.au/apace/apace.htm>

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