



## The South African Association for Clinical Biochemistry and Laboratory Medicine

### Successful 14<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Paediatric Laboratory Medicine in Durban garners record number of Scholarships and merit awards, diverse global representation, novel scientific programme and charity for children

*Submitted by Sharon M Geaghan MD on behalf of the IFCC Task Force on Paediatric Laboratory Medicine*



The IFCC's Task Force on Paediatric Laboratory Medicine organized its 14<sup>th</sup> successful Congress in Durban, South Africa, pro-

ffering new levels of scholarship grants and research awards, while continuing to attract global delegate representation, offer scientific novelty in programming, and provide charity for local children. One of the Task Force Committee's primary goals was to insure the Congress would be accessible, particularly for African colleagues. The Congress received 120 registered participants, and approximately a quarter (of 74 delegates) were African.

The delegates represented a diversity of scientific communities around the globe:



**The Key of Hope children's choir**

Algeria, Australia, Bolivia, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Poland, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States.

Scholarship grants were key to insuring accessibility, and we are grateful to the Society for the Study of Inborn Errors of Metabolism (SSIEM) for their generous support of 22 educational grants. SSIEM, founded in 1963, aims to foster the study of inherited metabolic disorders. It has over 1400 members and is truly international, with representation from more than 75 countries. A registered charity in the UK, the SSIEM



**SSIEM Scholarship recipients at the ICPLM**

publishes The Journal of Inherited Metabolic Disorders (see [ssiem.org](http://ssiem.org)). The Society also monitors training in paediatric metabolic medicine on behalf of the European Academy of Paediatrics.

Dr. Timothy Lang was instrumental in securing the travel grants, € 500 each, which were allocated to support individuals with interest in inherited metabolic disease. After publicity and recruitment of candidates through calls for applications by the Task Force, the Organizing Committee was able to offer every applicant a grant this year.

A larger number of monetary research prizes was a notable feature of this year's Congress, which included Best Poster prize for Corey Markus and team (Singapore, Australia) for "Derivation of data-driven, outcome-based critical values"; and second-place finalist Poster prize for Martin Hersberger and team (Switzerland) for "Development of a LC-MS/MS Method for the Quantification of 16 Steroids in Plasma from Children".

Merit awards were also presented for five additional outstanding posters (in alphabetical order): Sibtain Ahmed (Pakistan) for "Establishment of Reference Intervals of Thyroid Stimulating Hormone in Neonates-An Experience from Pakistan", Randa Al-ratrout (Saudi Arabia) for "The Frequency of Inherited Metabolic & Endocrine Disorders in the Eastern and North-Western Jawf Provinces of Saudi Arabia: Four Years' Data from the Newborn Screening Department , Ministry of Health, Dammam", Marta Camilot (Italy) for "1st and 99th percentiles of aminoac-

ids and acylcarnitines measured in dried blood spots collected at two and four weeks of life from prematures and/or low birth weight newborns for extended newborn screening"; Busadee

*(Ashandree Reddy-ZA): To have a conference of this magnitude in my own country was already an inspiration to me...The lectures were topical, vast and interesting and the presenters made an extra effort to engage and discuss which was refreshing. The intimate setting allowed for networking & open discussion outside the plenaries. In a short space of time a lot of ground was covered and it was interesting to see how far other countries have progressed ...I am grateful for the SSIEM travel bursary which has allowed me the opportunity to broaden my horizon and look to the future especially for my country & its health amongst our most vulnerable population.*

Pratumvit (Thailand) for "Close Correlation between Arterial and Central Venous Lactate Concentrations of Children in Shock: A Cross-sectional Study"; and Natalia Simakova (Russian Federation) for "Reference intervals for reticulocyte param-

eters of infants during their first year after birth using Sysmex XN-1000 hematology analyzer".

Of 52 accepted abstracts, 7 were offered oral presentation The Best Oral Presentation prize (for investigators > 40 years of age) was awarded to Chris Vorster (South Africa) for "Justification for and perceived barriers to the implementation of a newborn screening program for South Africa". The Best Oral Presentation prize (for young investigator, < 40 years of age) was awarded to Sonja Bartlett (Canada) for "A basic metabolomics investigation of the effect of nanogold based treatment: Potential applications /consequences in inborn errors of metabolism." In total, monetary prizes were provided to nine winners at the Congress.

Veteran judges noted an especially high quality of abstracts and posters for this Congress, combined with excellent oversight by Dr. Tze Ping Loh over the process and prizes.

(in alphabetical order): Sibtain Ahmed (Pakistan) for "Establishment of Reference Intervals of Thyroid Stimulating Hormone in Neonates-An Experience from Pakistan", Randa Al-ratrout (Saudi Arabia) for "The Frequency of Inherited Metabolic & Endocrine Disorders in the Eastern and North-Western Jawf Provinces of Saudi Arabia: Four Years' Data from the Newborn Screening Department , Ministry of Health, Dammam", Marta Camilot (Italy) for "1st and 99th percentiles of aminoac-



**SSIEM Scholarship recipients at the ICPLM**

Scientific programming focused on novel technologies and breaking news topics of paediatric interest, which included 4 distinguished plenary speakers in the following scientific realms: recent experience with the Ebola Virus in West Africa (Dr. Janusz Paweska), use of point of care to improve patient care (Dr. Sverre Sand-



berg), the microbiome in early life (Dr. Michael Surette) and the genetics of calcium metabolism disorders (Dr. Rajesh Thakker). Additionally, nine symposia featuring 32 speakers were offered in the general paediatric interest areas of newborn screening; endocrinology; panel discussion of critical values; reference intervals; next generation sequencing; nutrition and immunology; bone metabolism; select oral platform presentations; and general pediatric laboratory testing.

An initiative of this Congress's Organizing Committee was to identify an opportunity for charitable sponsorship to a local community of children, in keeping with the paediatric mission of the Task Force. Accordingly, Drs. Tahir Pillay and Sharon Geaghan arranged the opening ceremony to be graced by the Key of Hope Choir, a group of young girls and boys whose voices and joyful energy welcomed attendees and made spirits soar. In return for this gift, the Task Force donated to this meritorious organization, which helps children that have been orphaned by or otherwise affected by HIV and AIDS in South Africa. Specifically, over 1200 children are visited in their home every week, over 200 children are sent to school every year, and more than 300 children's rights cases are advocated for annually by this organization. For others who may wish to make their visit to South Africa into a lasting relationship, and might be interested in supporting a Durban-based fountain of goodwill and hope:

<https://keyofhope.org/>

*Justine Cole (ZA): Thank you again for this incredible opportunity to attend an international conference in paediatric laboratory medicine, specifically focused on inborn errors of metabolism, for which I have a particular passion. ...I thoroughly enjoyed all of the sessions at the ICPLM conference, as well as the opportunity to catch up with distant colleagues and to meet and interrogate the great minds in this field. The smaller numbers attending the conference meant that these individuals were more accessible to those of us that are junior and who would normally not have an opportunity to come close to them, let alone to sit at lunch with them! The conference was superbly organized, with all sessions running smoothly and to time. I thank you again for a most valuable experience.*

*Jocelyn Naicker (ZA)...The congress had a lively opening ceremony where the Key of Hope children's choir entertained us with enthusiastic renditions of popular local songs. The children's smiling faces set the tone for the academic programme leaving delegates also smiling and satisfied with the intellectual content of the congress ...There was a small group of attendees which allowed registrars and other trainees greater opportunity to network more meaningfully with all categories of laboratory staff including consultants and experts in their fields. I wish to thank the organizers for a highly enjoyable programme, for reducing the registration fee for African delegates and SSIEM for granting me a travel grant despite being an older delegate.*



Financial support for the Congress, a satellite meeting presented in advance of the IFCC World-Lab on a triennial basis, was independently recruited by the TF-PLM Committee members.

The efforts once again resulted in excellent funding, and our gratitude extends to Platinum level sponsor, Alexion Pharmaceuticals; six Gold level sponsors (in alphabetical order): American Association of Clinical Chemistry (AACC), Roche Diag-

nostics, Canadian Society of Clinical Chemists (CSCC), Deutschland Gesellschaft für Klinische Chemie und Laboratoriumsmedizin/German Society for Clinical Chemistry (DGKL), the Society for the Study of Inborn Errors of Metabolism (SSIEM), and the Swiss Society of Clinical Chemistry (SSCC); and Bronze level sponsor, Sarstedt. Additional sponsorships included the Royal College of Pathologists (RCP), South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) and the Federation of South African Societies of Pathology (FSASP).

Committee members include Chair, Michael Metz (AU) and Vice-Chair Timothy Lang (UK); Immediate Past-Chair Vijay Grey (CA); Past Past Chair Klaus Kohse (DE); and (in alphabetical order): Sharon Geaghan (USA); Martin Hersberger (CH); Patti Jones (USA); Tze Ping Loh (SG); Magdalena Turzyniecka (ZA) and Tahir Pillay (ZA). For the



## IFCC Task Force for Paediatric Laboratory Medicine

magnificent programme design (Dr. Magdalena Turzyniecka) and core leadership for the Durban Symposium, the trio of Drs. Michael Metz, Tahir Pillay and Magdalena Turzyniecka are heartily thanked.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Congress met the longstanding mission statement of the IFCC Task Force on Paediatric Laboratory Medicine : *improving the diagnosis and management of patients from birth to adolescence*. Looking ahead three years to 2020, the TF-PLM will continue its mission in Seoul, South Korea.

*(Corey Markus, Australia ) : I was the fortunate recipient of a travel scholarship from SSIEM...I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Organising Committee for recruiting these world class speakers for the Congress...I was welcomed to an emotional opening ceremony, with an uplifting performance from the children's choir, Key of Hope. Key of Hope provides long term mentoring, allowing children to thrive as citizen's and potential leaders, to combat the future challenges Africa faces. We were then provided with stark evidence of the tragic reality of life in Africa and risks healthcare workers face (both local and foreign), with Prof. Janusz Paweska opening plenary lecture discussing the ecological and epidemiological aspects of the recent Ebola outbreak in west Africa from 2013 to 2015...the work done by Prof. Janusz Paweska team gives hope to rapid and effective control of future viral outbreaks....I would like to thank the SSIEM for funding 22 travel scholarships, the largest number of scholarships awarded in the history of the ICPLM, of which I was fortunate enough to be granted one. I have returned back Australia having made many wonderful new friends and fostering new collaborative partnerships into the future.*



**2018 FSASP Congress:** The 2018 FSASP Congress is scheduled for 17-19 August 2018 in Cape Town.

The organising institution is Stellenbosch University.

The SAACB programme is being planned and will be released soon.



### Benefits of becoming a paid-up member of the SAACB

- You will receive the newsletter featuring interesting cases and discussions, as well as news and other useful information
- Substantial discounts are being offered to members who pay in advance. This year, a 40% discount is being offered to members who pay fees for 2018 and 2019 by 28 February.
- You will be eligible to apply for sponsorship to attend meetings
- You will receive a 50% discount on registration at the 2018 FSASP meeting
- You will be eligible to apply for IFCC Scholarships to attend international meetings
- You will be eligible for nomination to IFCC positions