

# The MSG

## ***Mycoses Study Group Quarterly Newsletter Fall 2007***

Welcome to the first edition of the *Mycoses Study Group Quarterly News Letter*. The purpose of this news letter is to keep our investigators and supporters apprised of the developments within the **MSG**, and to encourage support and involvement in our ongoing activities.

### *Introduction*

#### **Goals of the “New” MSG**

The recent change in our status from a federally funded clinical trials group to a multi-purpose, corporately funded group necessitates serious examination of the future role of the **MSG** in a changing and ever-tightening regulatory environment. Achieving an appropriate balance between the legal requirements and ethical conduct of clinical trials, while responding to the need for time-efficient yet thoughtful development of effective new agents and diagnostic tests, developing an independent CME function, and creating an environment whereby young investigators can grow in clinical mycology are the major challenge for this study group. Recognizing that the clinical trials landscape has changed dramatically over the last 20 to 30 years, we believe the **MSG** is in an excellent position to adapt to and take advantage of these changes, while maintaining the scientific integrity of the group and the validity of the clinical studies which it performs. In broad terms, we believe that the **MSG** should continue to serve the following functions:

- 1) In partnership with industry, conduct scientifically meritorious clinical and therapeutic trials for the invasive mycoses.
- 2) Develop an international presence through the involvement of standing international steering committee members and international study sites; explore joint initiatives with other international groups, such as ISHAM, EORTC, Mycology Interest Group (Australia/NZ), et al.
- 3) Within the framework of a clinical trials network, develop and validate new diagnostic tests for invasive mycoses, including but not limited to invasive candidiasis, aspergillosis, zygomycosis, and other invasive mould infections.
- 4) In conjunction with regulatory agencies (eg FDA, EMEA) develop an approach to the validation of licensed diagnostic tests for use in the context of clinical trials.
- 5) Incorporate epidemiologic and genetic components into appropriate clinical trials.
- 6) Develop a CME function together with ISHAM and independent of the clinical trials group and the influence of any **single** corporate entity.
- 7) Continue to develop treatment guidelines in partnership with IDSA.
- 8) Become an important vehicle in the training of young investigators through involvement in clinical trials, workshops, and fellowship awards.

In order to accomplish these goals, **MSG** will need to attract funding from a number of sources including corporate, private, and institutional. These funds will be applied toward the maintenance of the infrastructure of the **MSG**, and not necessarily towards the conduct of a specific project. Our current sponsors include the following corporations, and we most grateful for their generous support:

**Astellas US Corporation**  
**Merck Inc**  
**Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, Inc**  
**Schering-Plough Research Institute**

## *MSG Meeting at ICAAC*

Plans are underway for the **MSG Reception** to be held in conjunction with ICAAC on Tuesday, September 18<sup>th</sup> from 5:30-7:30pm at the Hyatt Regency Chicago, 151 East Wacker Avenue. This will be an informal gathering with a brief business meeting to provide an update of the group's clinical, educational and administrative activities. All investigators and sponsors are encouraged to attend this brief but informative meeting/reception. If you are planning to attend ICAAC, then please try to join us for this special event.

## *Committee Structure*

The **MSG Central Unit** is comprised of the Principal Investigator, Peter Pappas, MD, FACP, Administrator, Mary Ellen Walker, MSN, RN, and Administrative Associate Joyce Kanute and is located at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Establishing the research priorities and consideration of specific investigator-initiated research (typically with substantial industry, federal or institutional support), are the primary objectives of the **MSG Steering Committee, (SC)**, which considers these proposals on a regular basis. Steering Committee members are experienced clinical and laboratory mycologists who review proposals for scientific and biostatistical integrity, importance to the medical community, and feasibility.

The Steering Committee (SC) will consist of 13 voting member, and include the following individuals:

**Peter G. Pappas, Chair (US)**  
**Carol Kauffman (US)**    **Jack Edwards (US)**  
**Tania Sorrell (AUS)**    **John Wingard (US)**  
**Jack Sobel (US)**        **Eric Bow (CAN)**  
**Tom Patterson (US)**    **John Perfect (US)**  
**Marcio Nucci (BRA)**    **Emilio Bouza (SPA)**

**Bill Dismukes and John Bennett will serve as non-voting advisors.**

An important new direction of the **MSG** is the creation of the **MSG Education Committee (EC)**. The function of the EC will be to develop innovative CME programs, in cooperation with the International Society of Human and Animal Mycology (ISHAM), targeting both general and mycology-oriented audiences. These programs will be developed for variety of venues including, but not limited to traditional grand rounds, regional seminars, national/international meetings, and Web-based educational programs. In order to avoid potential conflict of interest, the activities of the EC must be independent of the clinical trials component of the MSG.

The activities of the CME initiative will be directed by the **Executive Director** of the **MSG Educational Committee (EC)**, ideally an individual with extensive experience in CME, corporate fund raising, and meeting logistics. This individual will work closely with the EC and ISHAM to develop short and long term educational objectives, training/fellowship programs, and other educational initiatives.

Education Committee (EC) Members are:  
**US:**

<b>Alison Freifeld</b>	<b>Barbara Alexander</b>
<b>Kieran Marr</b>	<b>D.Kontoyiannis</b>
<b>David Andes</b>	<b>Helen Boucher</b>
<b>John Baddley</b>	<b>Peter Pappas</b>
<b>John Hiemenz</b>	<b>John Bennett</b>
<b>Graeme Forest</b>	<b>Sue Hadley</b>
<b>L.Ostrosky-Zeichner</b>	

**Europe:**

**Olivier Lortholary (FR)**    **Oliver Cornely (FRG)**  
**Bart-Jan Kullberg (NETH)**

**Latin America:**

**Luis Thompson (CHI)**  
**Marcio Nucci (BRA)**

**Australia:**

**David Ellis (AUS)**

## *Current Educational Initiatives*

### **IDSA**

The MSG EC is co-sponsoring one symposium at IDSA. “**Update on Fungal Treatment Guidelines**” interactive session is scheduled for Saturday, October 6, 2007, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m., **and is cosponsored by MSG and IDSA.**

### **ICAAC**

The **ICAAC** Interactive Symposium "**Fungal Infections in Special Hosts**" will be co-chaired by Peter Pappas and Olivier Cornely and co-sponsored by the MSG. The date and time of the symposium is pending. Additionally, the **Fungal Treatment Guidelines** will be presented and discussed at ICAAC and is co-sponsored by MSG.

### **ISHAM Affiliation**

Discussions with ISHAM regarding official involvement with this group are moving forward, although all details of formal affiliation have not been finalized. However, once consummated, this affiliation appears to be a ‘win-win’ situation for both the MSG and ISHAM. MSG’s affiliation with ISHAM is particularly important given their long-standing involvement with CME activities internationally. Their non-profit status would also be advantageous to our group as it could greatly simplify and facilitate fund-raising. ISHAM, traditionally a more laboratory-based group, benefits by improving their visibility and influence in the clinical mycology and general ID world. Those of us who do not already belong to ISHAM will be strongly encouraged to become dues-paying members of ISHAM once this affiliation is formalized. I hope to announce this MSG-ISHAM affiliation formally very soon.

### ***‘Dr. Fungus’ Website***

The Dr. Fungus website has agreed to support the MSG by allowing us to post our activities via their

website. The following web addresses will access MSG activities:

<http://mycosesstudygroup.org/> and  
<http://www.mycosesstudygroup.org/>

The domain - mycosesstudygroup.org - will only be visible on the initial entry page into doctorfungus.org. The MSG is working with the Dr. Fungus web development team to create a comprehensive overview of current and future MSG activities. Additional details will be provided as they evolve

### ***Clinical Trials Update***

Below are listed the currently approved MSG projects:

**MSG-01: A randomized, double-blind, placebo controlled trial of caspofungin prophylaxis followed by preemptive therapy for invasive candidiasis in high risk adults in the critical care setting.**

**PI: Luis Ostrosky-Zeichner**

**Corporate Sponsor: Merck & Co..**

We have 14 of the 15 sites necessary for this study. 8 sites have IRB approval, 5 have submitted to their IRB and our newest site is beginning the IRB application process. The study has been initiated at 5 sites and 2 subjects have been enrolled. The study is registered on the Clinicaltrials.gov website.

**MSG-02: Candidemia meta-analysis**

**PIs: Baddley, Andes, Safdar, Playford, Kullberg**

Although not formally a “clinical trial”, this concept was presented and approved by the **MSG** Steering Committee, and will examine the randomized candidemia treatment trials that have been completed to date. The ‘**working group**’ will consist of more junior investigators (John Baddley, David Andes, Nasia Safdar,) and a senior advisory group. Bart-Jan Kullberg will serve as the primary senior advisor to this group, help

formulate an analysis plan, assign responsibilities, establish a timetable, etc.

### **MSG-03: Invasive Aspergillosis Combination Study**

PI: Kieren Marr

Corporate Sponsor: Pfizer

The MSG has agreed to endorse this study sponsored by Pfizer. **MSG** will be involved in the final phases of protocol development, selection and of the Data Review Committee, site selection, statistical analysis, and submission for presentation/publication.

#### **Ongoing discussions**

We are in preliminary discussions with the following companies concerning the MSG's early involvement in the clinical development of these compounds:

**SPRI:** oral posaconazole for several mycoses including invasive aspergillosis, zygomycosis, the phaeohyphomycoses, and the endemic fungal infections.

**Novartis:** We've had very preliminary discussions about the clinical development of efungimab (Mycograb) as part of a large international candidemia trial.

**Eisai Medical Research, Inc:** We've renewed discussions concerning the potential clinical development of ravuconazole (iv and po) for a variety of invasive fungal infections.

**Enzon:** Discussions continue concerning potential new studies examining first line therapy and/or prophylaxis with ABLC.

### ***MSG / FDA / EMEA***

#### ***Galactomannan Project***

The proposal for the use of galactomannan as a qualified biomarker in the context of a clinical trials for treatment of invasive aspergillosis was judged by the FDA Biomarker Qualification Review Team to have a potentially important impact on drug development and regulatory review, and they have encouraged the MSG to proceed with the next step through their Pilot Process for Biomarker Qualification pathway. Serum and BAL galactomannan will be considered as separate proposals. Since the original decision by the FDA to move forward, the FDA and EMEA have agreed to proceed together with this initiative, and make decisions concerning the use of GM as a biomarker that will apply to both the US and the EU. Johan Maertens, Paul Verweij, Barb Alexander, and Kieren Marr have agreed to spearhead this effort in the US and Europe. Their leadership and the MSG's supporting role in bringing this effort together is critical. An initial review of the data by our membership is planned for mid-fall. Several individuals have offered to provide assistance in this detailed and intensive process, and we hope to involve all who have a genuine interest in exploring the use of GM as a validated biomarker for clinical trials of invasive aspergillosis. Please provide Johan, Paul, Barb, Kieren and the MSG administrative staff your support in this important initiative.