

Meetings report

Xth International Congress on Paracoccidioidomycosis

Medellin, Columbia August 7th-10th

There was much to note and to celebrate and enjoy at the recent 10th International Congress on Paracoccidioidomycosis in Medellin. It was a time for retrospective reflection on the anniversary of a hundred years of research on *Paracoccidioides brasiliensis* (Pb or Paracocco –the Brazilian pet name for this remarkable dimorphic human pathogen). It was a time to honour the pioneering research of Dr Angela Restrepo, who was involved in the organising of the first of these symposia and whose work over many decades raised the whole profile of this fungus on the international stage.

The 10th ICP may indeed become to be seen as somewhat of a watershed. It was at this meeting that the first substantial analyses of the three Pb genome sequencing projects by the Broad Institute were reported and discussed. It is this year when the first stable transformation systems and tools for reverse genetic analyses have emerged, heralding a new era of systematic molecular genetic research in Pb. Dr Restrepo challenged the emerging generation of Pb scientists to make the information from this meeting the foundation of their future careers to continue the work towards an understanding of the biology, immunology and pathogenesis of the organism and to work towards a future of better diagnostics and disease treatment. The meeting was packed with cutting edge discussions of Pb genomics, immune responses,, virulence attributes, cell biology, epidemiology, public health issues, antifungal chemotherapy and evolutionary biology and as well as a smattering of research talks and historical overviews on the progress of understanding of other fungal diseases such as Coccidioidomycosis, Histoplasmosis and Candidosis.

With over 250 delegates the size of the attending Pb community was not dissimilar to the audiences at other recent specialist medical mycology meetings on *Candida*, *Aspergillus* and *Cryptococcus*. There was a healthy helping of posters, at sessions that was made even more tasty by the servings of a huge array of delicious tropical fruits. Delegates were entertained at the Desfile de Silleteros (Carrier's Parade) flower festival and at the Museo de Antioquia - gallery of the remarkable local artist Botero. The finale was graced by a memorable performance of a local children's orchestra who dazzled the audience with a vibrant and vivacious mix of musical pieces that will live long in the memory. Columbia and Medellin are discarding their old unwanted reputations of violence and unrest and, like the research in their own community, the future looks bright, positive, cultured and fertile. The meeting was a triumph of good organisation, exciting science, local culture and warm hospitality.

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