



The International Organization for Mycoplasma (IOM) IOM Newsletter

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Chair: Prof Daniel Brown (USA) **Chair-Elect:** Dr Steven Djordjevic (Australia); **Past Chair:** Prof Joachim Frey (Switzerland); **Secretary-General:** Dr Roger Ayling (UK); **Treasurer:** Dr Gail Gasparich (USA); **Membership Secretary:** Dr Anja Persson (Sweden); **IRPCM Chair:** Dr Glenn Browning (Australia); **Information Officer:** Dr Chris Minion (USA); **Board Members-At-Large:** Dr Michael Calcutt (USA); Dr Caio Cordova (Brazil); Dr Christine Knox (Australia); Dr Laura Regassa (USA); Dr Brad Spiller (UK).

In this Newsletter:

Vote for your new members of the IOM Board:
Chair-Elect, Secretary-General, Membership Secretary

Update on the IOM 2014 Congress



Find out who are the winners of the Prestigious IOM Awards:

- The Emmy Klieneberger Nobel Award
- The Derrick Edward Award
- The Peter Hannan Award
- The Robert F. Whitcomb Award

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MESSAGE FROM THE IOM CHAIR

Hello again friends and colleagues,

Since the last Newsletter was published the Board of Directors has been working on a number of issues important to the IOM. Most exciting for me has been the successful recovery of The Mollicutes Collection of Cultures and Antisera which was a priority the Board established during our 2012 meetings. The collection consists of three parts: 1) Joe Tully's original collection from the U.S. National Institutes of Health that includes almost all genera of mollicutes except hemoplasmas, phytoplasmas, anaeroplasmas and asteroleplasma, 2) unconjugated and FITC-conjugated antisera against some of the organisms, and 3) Bob Whitcomb's collection limited to plant and insect isolates (except phytoplasmas) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Tully's collection holds about 4,000 vials of lyophilized culture material now precisely counted and identified to *Mycoplasma* species, strain and passage level; about 100 vials of *M. capricolum* or *M. mycoides* that were segregated from the main collection pending PCR-based exclusion from the U.S. Select Agent category; about 300 vials with strain identifiers assigned to *Mycoplasma* genus level only; about 1,200 vials with strain identifiers assigned to *Spiroplasma* genus level only; and about 80 vials with no identification whatsoever, for a total of about 6,000 now precisely inventoried vials. The vials identified to species level have been organized alphabetically, and the others categorically, for storage and retrieval at the University of Florida. We have very little historical information on the Whitcomb collection, which consists of about another 6,000 vials of lyophilized culture material. Some of the spiroplasma specimens are labeled to genus, species and strain level, but the overwhelming majority of the labels or documentation available to us provide no basis for assignment even to species. Edward Clark, a microbiologist from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, will help us to document some of these specimens. We are about two-thirds of the way through inventorying the approximately 18,000 vials of antisera, thus there are about 30,000 items altogether in the Mollicutes Collection.

At the request of the Board, an ad hoc committee chaired by Dave Williamson and including David Taylor-Robinson, Josy Bové and Joel Baseman has formulated a recommendation regarding the best way to commemorate the lifetime achievements in mycoplasmaology of Joe Tully. This will be an action item for the Board during the 2014 meetings.

When the present Board first convened, Article VII, Section 6 of the IOM Constitution stipulated that IOM finances are to be reviewed annually by an internal review board composed of at-large IOM Board members. Section 7 of this Article required an external "compilation report" of the finances at the end of each Treasurer's term. However, the Certified Public Accountant who performed a preliminary review of our accounts recommended that the expense of the report (\$3,000 - \$4,000) would be excessive considering how simple and transparent our accounts are. In essence we would be paying someone to put our records into a spreadsheet. This is costly and unnecessary given the oversight provided in Article VII, Section 6 as well as the quarterly reports already generated by the IOM Treasurer. Therefore the Board recently voted to amend Article VII of the IOM Constitution, which now reads: "The IOM treasurer must report on the financial transactions of that organization. This report should be made quarterly (or at the request of the Executive Board). The purpose of financial reporting is to make sure that any decisions that need to be made can take into consideration accurate and up-to-date financial data", along with a definition of what constitutes the financial records. The complete text of the revised IOM Constitution is available on the IOM-online.org website under the "Governance" link. My personal thanks go to past Treasurer Mitch Balish and current Treasurer Gail Gasparich for helping to accomplish this recurring cost savings to the IOM.

The 20th International Congress of the IOM, IOM2014 in Blumenau SC, Brazil, is on the immediate horizon! I'll emphasize again that in keeping with the IOM's global reach and traditions of exploration and discovery, 2014 will mark the first time the Congress is held anywhere in South America. Submission of abstracts to be considered for platform presentations is now closed, and the Scientific Program Committee chaired by Pascal Sirand-Pugnet will soon finalize the program. Watch the Congress website IOM2014.org for updates and contact Caio De Cordova, the chairman of the Local Organizing Committee, with any concerns regarding travel to Brazil or social events planned. And a little bit beyond the horizon, the Local Organizing Committee for IOM2016, which will be held in Brisbane, Australia, has already begun to hold planning meetings. The chairperson is Dr. Christine Knox of Queensland University of Technology.

Finally, I'll take this opportunity to personally congratulate the recipients of the 2014 IOM Scientific Awards. Chairman Shigetou Namba and the other members of the selection committee had an impressive slate of nominations to consider, and the recipients selected are all highly deserving of recognition: the 2014 Emmy Klieneberger-Nobel Award for outstanding research in mycoplasmaology, to Assunta Bertaccini; the 2014 Derrick Edward Award for outstanding research in mycoplasmaology by young investigator, to Carole Lartigue; the 2014 Peter Hannan Award for outstanding research in applied clinical mycoplasmaology, to Cécile Bébéar; and the 2014 Robert F. Whitcomb Award for outstanding research achievements in the field of plant and insect mycoplasmaology, to Ing-Ming Lee.

Best wishes to everyone for an attractive and successful Congress in Blumenau, be sure to register by May 15th, and I look forward to seeing many of you there soon!

Dan Brown
Gainesville, Florida USA

IOM BOARD ELECTIONS

International Organization for Mycoplasmaology (IOM) Elections for IOM Board Positions 2014

The IOM Board of Directors consists of the Chair, who shall serve as presiding officer of this council, the Immediate Past-Chair, the Chair-Elect, the Secretary-General, the Membership Secretary, the Treasurer, and five (5) appointed At-Large members. The Chair of the International Research Program on Comparative Mycoplasmaology; and the Information Officer who is an ex-officio member of the Board.

This biennium we need to elect:

- A Chair-Elect for 2014 -2016, who will normally go on to be the Chair (2016-2018) and Past-Chair (2018-2020).
- The Secretary-General who normally serves a 2 year term (2014 – 2016)
- A Membership Secretary who normally serves a 4 year term (2014 – 2018)

The candidates are:

For Chair-Elect: Assunta Bertaccini Cécile Bébéar,

For Secretary-General: Brad Spiller Paola Pilo

For Membership Secretary: Laura Regassa Caio Mauricio Mendes de Cordova

The closing date for voting is Friday 21st March 2014.

**Voting is secret and is carried out through the IOM Website:
<http://www.iom-online.org>**

You will need to log on as an IOM member to be able to vote.

CHAIR-ELECT CANDIDATES

Chair-Elect Candidate: Cécile Bébéar



Cécile Bébéar, MD-PhD, is a Professor of Clinical Microbiology in the Department of Bacteriology at the Bordeaux University Hospital and at the University of Bordeaux, where she serves as director of the "Mycoplasmal and Chlamydial Infections in Humans" research department, which has been recognized as the French Expert Laboratory in human mycoplasmas and the French Reference Center for chlamydiae. She has been a member of the IOM since 1994 and of Division G (Mycoplasmology) of the American Society for Microbiology since 1996. She became a mycoplasmologist upon joining the groups of Dr. Christiane Bébéar and Dr. Josy Bové at the University of Bordeaux. After obtaining an undergraduate degree with Dr. Joël Renaudin with her work on the viral sequences of *Spiroplasma citri*, she received her PhD in 1998 with her analysis of the mechanisms of resistance to fluoroquinolones in *Mycoplasma hominis*. She joined Dr. Joel Baseman's laboratory as a post-doctoral fellow in 1998, where she played a role in determining the virulence role of the peptide methionine reductase in *M. genitalium*. Her research focuses on the molecular mechanisms of tetracycline, macrolide and fluoroquinolone resistance in pathogenic human mycoplasmas and the implication of this knowledge on resistance epidemiology and diagnosis as well as treatment. She also focuses on the epidemiology, diagnosis and molecular typing of *M. pneumoniae*, *M. genitalium* and *M. hominis* infections and the interaction of *M. hominis* with the innate immune system. Through collaboration with Dr. Alain Blanchard's group, she reported the genome sequencing and annotation of the 1st *M. hominis* genome. The results are published in journals, including Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy, Journal of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy, Clinical Infectious Diseases, The Journal of Infectious Diseases, Emerging Infectious Diseases, Clinical Microbiology and Infection, Journal of Clinical Microbiology, PloS Genetics, PloS One, Journal of Bacteriology, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, BMC Microbiology and Journal of Microbiological Methods. She was strongly involved in the Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute sub-committee coordinated by Dr. Ken Waites, which published in 2011 the *Methods for Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing for Human Mycoplasmas; Approved Guideline* (M43-A). Recently, she and her European and Israeli colleagues made a proposal to the European Society for Clinical Microbiology (ESCMID) to establish a new Study Group to study and improve the diagnosis, treatment, control and prevention of *Mycoplasma* and *Ureaplasma* spp. infections in humans. The ESCMID Study Group for Mycoplasma Infections (ESGMI) launched in June 2013, and she serves as chair of the ESGMI. Dr. Bébéar received the IOM's Derrick Edward Award for outstanding Research in Mycoplasmology in 2002. Her past and current IOM responsibilities include Board Member-At-Large (2004 and 2006), Chair of the Scientific Program Committee (2008 IOM Congress, Tianjin) and member of the Scientific Program Committee (2000-2002-2010) and of the Scientific Awards Committee (2006 and 2012). She was the team leader for the Chemotherapy Group of the International Research Programme on Comparative Mycoplasmology (2000-2006), and she is the current vice-chair of the IRPCM.

Chair-Elect Candidate: Assunta Bertaccini



Assunta Bertaccini is an associate professor of Advanced Plant Pathology and Epidemiology and Molecular Detection of Plant Diseases at the *Alma Mater Studiorum* University of Bologna, Italy. Since 1977, she has continued to study phytoplasmas and phytoplasma-associated diseases with all the available tools, ranging from electron microscopy to molecular techniques, and she eventually succeeded in phytoplasma axenic cultivation. She collaborated with scientists worldwide enhancing the awareness and importance of plant mycoplasmas in agriculture in both advanced and emerging Countries. Her initial collaboration with USDA colleagues allowed her to organize the first laboratory solely dedicated to phytoplasma research in Italy. By leading and managing this laboratory she was then able to initiate research with colleagues around the world, mainly focused on the epidemiological and practical aspects of phytoplasma-associated diseases. She maintains a micropropagated collection of phytoplasma infected shoots, which now includes more than 150 worldwide strains and is able to provide reference strains to plant mycoplasmologists for research purposes (<http://www.ipwgnet.org/collection>). In the field of epidemiology she was first to demonstrate the presence of aster yellows transovarial transmission, and reported molecular evidence of phytoplasma seed transmission. In close collaboration with entomologists she carried out epidemiological studies of phytoplasma-associated diseases with economically relevant agricultural species such as grapevine, cassava, oil palm and corn. She discovered the presence of phytoplasma strains associated with “flavescence dorée” disease of grapevine and verified their differential geographic distribution and virulence. Her research activity was also devoted to improving the taxonomic identification of phytoplasmas. Initially she reached consensus agreement on the ribosomal group system and then contributed to the development and implementation of the ‘*Candidatus*’ system. More recently she has developed a DNA barcoding system for universal identification of ‘*Candidatus* Phytoplasmas’. Her research on differential expression of plant genes, as well as on differential metabolite profiles after phytoplasma infection, in naturally infected fruit trees and medicinal plant species, also contributed to the information about physiological modification induced by phytoplasmas in naturally infected species. Very recently in collaboration with David and Helena Windsor and her team she obtained the axenic growth of a number of phytoplasmas. Her research has been published in: *Phytopathology*; *Plant Disease*; *Annals of Applied Biology*; *Insect Molecular Biology*; *Molecular and Cellular Probes*; *Journal of Applied Microbiology*; *International Journal of Systematic and Evolutionary*; *Gene*; *Journal of Agriculture Food Chemistry*; *Journal of Chromatography*; *European Journal of Plant Pathology*; *PLoS One*. Since 2007 she has assembled and is leading an International working group on phytoplasma diseases with an aim to increase the awareness and the skill of colleagues from agriculture towards the plant mycoplasma field (<http://www.ipwgnet.org>). She was leading (2019-2013) an European COST project about “Integrated Management of Phytoplasma Epidemics in Different Crop Systems”; serves on the editorial board of *Phytopathologia mediterranea*, and is editor chief of *Phytopathogenic Mollicutes*. She has been a member of the IOM since 1994 and in 2010 she organized the 18th IOM meeting in Chianciano (Italy). She is leader of the IRPCM team on spiroplasmas, mesoplasmas, phytoplasmas and entomoplasmas and was the recipient of the EKN award in 2014.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY CANDIDATES

Membership Secretary Candidate: Caio Mauricio Mendes de Cordova



Caio Mauricio Mendes de Cordova, PhD, is full professor of Clinical Laboratory Science at the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences of the University of Blumenau, Brazil. He was introduced to mycoplasma in 1996 during his Master degree studies at the University of São Paulo (USP), investigating the role of mollicutes in STDs and HIV infection. Part of his PhD thesis was developed at Dr. Alain Blanchard's laboratory in Bordeaux, constructing self-replicating vectors for mollicute transformation and gene disruption. He joined the IOM in 1998 when he attended his first congress in Sydney, Australia. His main research focuses include association of mollicutes with human diseases, antibiotic resistance, and more recently, the use of the mollicutes model in the development of potential new antimicrobial drugs. Previous administrative positions and roles during his carrier included Department Head, undergraduate course coordinator, representative on the University Council, Director of the University Clinical Laboratory, and Director of a private molecular diagnosis clinical laboratory. Prof. Caio Cordova is also member of the Brazilian Society of Clinical Analysis and the Brazilian Society of Microbiology. He was the chair of a regional congress of Clinical Analysis, member of the Brazilian Society of Clinical Analysis Certification Board, and is the chair of the Local Organizing Committee of the 2014 IOM Congress, in Blumenau, Brazil. Prof. Caio is pleased to be nominated for Membership Secretary for the opportunity to continue to serve the IOM, and believes that his experience can contribute to the continuous improvement and growth of the Organization.

Membership Secretary Candidate: Laura Regassa



Laura B. Regassa received her Ph.D. and postdoctoral training from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, with a specialization in bacterial pathogenesis. She is a Professor of Molecular Biology and Director of the Molecular Biology Initiative (MBI) Program at Georgia Southern University. The MBI Program provides intensive molecular biology and professional training for graduate students, as well as educational outreach. Laura began working in Mycoplasma in 2002 via collaborations and joined IOM in 2004; she manages a small Spiroplasma research group with a focus on systematics and biodiversity. The team has described 14 new Spiroplasma serogroups from strains isolated in Costa Rica and Australia; and demonstrated a lack of host specificity for a common vector, tabanid flies. Laura has served as the current or prior PI for funding from several divisions of the National Science Foundation, with research outcomes published in a variety of journals including *Biodiversity and Conservation*, *Canadian Journal of Microbiology*, *Journal of Experimental Marine Biology and Ecology*, *Frontiers in Bioscience*, and *Microbial Pathogenesis*. In addition, she was a co-author of the Spiroplasmataceae chapter in Bergey's Manual of Systematic Bacteriology (Division Tenericutes [Mollicutes], 2nd ed., Vol. 4). Laura is a former Division Chair of the American Society for Microbiology (ASM) Division G [Mycoplasma], the ASM Division G Advisor, a member of the ASM Council, a former President and Advisor of the ASM Southeastern Branch, a former member of the Scientific Program Committee for the 2010 IOM Congress, and a member of the International Committee on Systematics of Prokaryotes Subcommittee on the Taxonomy of Mollicutes.

SECRETARY-GENERAL CANDIDATES

Secretary- General Candidate: Brad Spiller



Brad Spiller is a senior lecturer at Cardiff University School of Medicine in Cardiff UK, where he is head of the Ureaplasma and Mycoplasma research group. He has been working with Ureaplasma for 9 years but has been publishing on microbial immune evasion for over 20 years. He obtained a PhD from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada in 1995 and was recruited to establish a translational research group specialising in infections of preterm neonates at the University Hospital of Wales in 2005. He has a long standing close collaboration with, and co-supervises students for, the Health Protection Agency in London (now Health Protection England) on immune recognition of Mollicutes and clinical diagnostics relating

to Mycoplasmas and Ureaplasmas that infect humans. Brad is currently a member-at-large for the IOM governing board. He is also currently the officer in charge of Antimicrobial Resistance for the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases Mycoplasma study group, and has previous publications defining methods for resistance screening and the discovering underlying resistance mechanisms. He has also been an active member of the American and UK Societies for Microbiology, contributing to meeting organisations and promoting post-graduate presentations and feedback at national meetings. He was approached to stand as a candidate for Secretary-General by the current post holder Roger Ayling and realises it is no easy task to fill Roger's shoes. He feels that the Secretary-General has a critical role for the overall functioning of the IOM which include: Making sure that members are kept up to date with ongoing international endeavours (for example, the continued archiving of the legacy Mollicutes Culture Collection from Drs. Tully and Whitcomb). Ensuring detailed and early notification of the major biennial meeting as well as smaller sub-group Mollicute-related meetings; collating and distributing regular newsletters to highlight research group activities that promote collaboration and continue the long-standing support and encouragement for new IOM members. Most importantly, he feels that the ability of the International Organisation of Mycoplasmology to run smoothly and its continued success, is correlated to the level of support the Chairman and the board receive from the Secretary-General. In this, Brad pledges to continue Roger's tradition of ensuring all required support documents and supplementary information are complete and accurate for their timely distribution to the Chairman and board to facilitate their decisions that continue to guide the organisation.

Secretary- General Candidate: Paola Pilo



Paola Pilo has been working with *Mycoplasma* sp for more than ten years. She studied biology at the University of Geneva, Switzerland and she earned her PhD at the University of Bern in 2004 focusing on the molecular mechanisms of pathogenicity of *Mycoplasma mycoides* subsp. *mycoides*. After the completion of her PhD studies, she worked as a research fellow for two years at Columbia University, New York, in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology on interactions between intracellular bacteria and host cells with the aim of identifying genes involved in the diversion of normal eukaryotic membrane trafficking. In 2006, she moved back to the University of Bern, where she headed the Swiss national reference center for highly pathogenic bacteria until 2013. At the same time, she completed an interdisciplinary master degree of life science law at the Faculty of Law, University of Geneva in 2010. Currently, she is leading investigations on host-pathogen interactions and molecular epidemiology of *Mycoplasma* sp and highly pathogenic bacteria such as *Francisella tularensis* and *Brucella* sp.

IOM AWARDS

Emmy Klieneberger-Nobel Award – for outstanding research in mycoplasmaology

2014 Recipient: Dr. Assunta Bertaccini

Dr. Assunta Bertaccini has made prominent and sustained research contributions to the field of mycoplasmaology throughout her highly distinguished career. Among these are her outstanding contribution in classifying phytoplasmas by developing a DNA bar-coding system for '*Candidatus* Phytoplasma' species; taking the initiative in establishing a culture collection accessible to all plant mycoplasmaologists; and enhancing the awareness of plant mycoplasmas importance in agriculture in both advanced and developing countries through collaborations with scientists worldwide.

She received her Master's degree in Biology in 1977 and a Ph.D. in Plant Pathology in 1979, both from the University of Bologna, Italy, where she is now an Associate Professor. After that for several years she worked on Molecular Plant Pathology at USDA (USA) as a Visiting Scientist. She organized the first laboratory only dedicated to phytoplasma research in Italy, where she initiated research in collaboration with colleagues worldwide; which was mainly focused on the epidemiological and practical aspects of phytoplasma-associated diseases, using many scientific approaches starting with electron microscopy and extending to molecular techniques.

In the field of Epidemiology she was the first to apply dot and Southern non-radioactive hybridization methods, and later developed the first microarray tests for phytoplasma detection in naturally infected plant material. She was the first to demonstrate the presence of aster yellows transovarial transmission; discovered the presence of phytoplasma strains associated with "flavescence doree" disease of grapevine and verified their differential geographic distribution and virulence.

She initiated the first micropropagated phytoplasma infected shoot collection, which now contains more than 150 strains from the world, as a repository and reference which provides strains to mycoplasmaologists for research purposes.

Her research activity has also been devoted to improving the taxonomic identification of phytoplasmas. Initially she reached a consensus agreement on the ribosomal group system, and then contributed to the development and implementation of the '*Candidatus*' system. More recently she developed a DNA bar-coding system for the universal identification of '*Candidatus* Phytoplasmas'. She also applied and developed phytoplasma multigenic typing systems for strain characterization to be able to differentiate the various phytoplasma-associated diseases.

Her life long research has resulted in a large number of publications providing new insights into the diagnosis and approaches for the most economical management of phytoplasma-associated diseases.

Derrick Edward Award – for outstanding research in mycoplasmaology by a young investigator

2014 Recipient: Dr. Carole Lartigue

Dr. Carole Lartigue has made major research accomplishments in mycoplasmaology and synthetic biology. This includes creating genomes from bacteria and genome transplantation in bacteria; the development of a puromycin selectable marker and new *oriC* plasmids for mycoplasma research; as well as the discovery of new restriction enzyme systems in mycoplasmas.

Following undergraduate and graduate training in Biology and Microbiology at the Victor Segalen Bordeaux 2 University (France), she entered a Ph.D. program at INRA-Bordeaux, where she studied the molecular mechanisms of Mycoplasma pathogenicity and played a key role in the development of the first stable *oriC* plasmid vectors for several *Mollicutes* species.

After receiving her degree in 2003, she stayed and participated in comparative genomics work, until she moved to the USA in 2004 to join the J. Craig Venter Institute's Synthetic Biology Group as a Post-doctoral Fellow. During that time, she published two especially groundbreaking papers in Science as the first author: one on her development of the lynchpin technology of bacterial genome transplantation describing the process of isolating whole genomes from *M. mycoides* and then booting up those genomes by transplanting into *M. capricolum* cells; the other on another key technology to produce bacterial strains from *M. mycoides* genomes that have been cloned and engineered in yeast. These technologies directly led the creation of the world's first synthetic bacterial cell. She was appointed Assistant Professor of JCVI before she left to return to France in 2009.

Since September 2010, she has been working as a Research Fellow at the French National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA) in Bordeaux to extend her genome transplantation technology to other mycoplasma species. Working with international collaborators one aim of the work is to develop new vaccines against *M. mycoides subsp. mycoides*. # #

Peter Hannan Award – for outstanding research in applied clinical mycoplasmaology

2014 Recipient: Dr. Cécile Bébéar

Dr. Cécile Bébéar has made significant research contributions to the understanding and control of human mycoplasmal disease through her investigations of the molecular mechanisms, detection methods, and epidemiology of antimicrobial resistance in mollicutes of human origins.

She received her Master of Biological and Medical Science degree from the Victor Segalen Bordeaux 2 University in 1991. She followed this with her Postgraduate Diploma with research on the characterization of viral sequences in chromosomal DNA of *Spiroplasma citri*; and then gained an Inter-University Diploma in Methods and Markers in Microbiological Epidemiology, and a Bacteriology Diploma from the Pasteur Institute. She qualified as an MD completing her speciality residency in Medical Biology at the Bordeaux University Hospital in 1995 and obtained a Ph.D. degree from the same University and INRA in 1998, with research on the characterization and genomic mechanisms of fluorquinolone resistance mutations in *M. hominis*.

She has been a pioneer in experimental *in vitro* studies examining the most common genetic mechanisms underlying antimicrobial resistance in mollicutes infecting humans. She developed the real-time PCR methods for detection of *M. hominis* and macrolide-resistant *M. pneumoniae*, and the new molecular-based typing systems, such as multiple-locus variable-number tandem repeat analysis and MALDI-TOF techniques for mollicutes. She performed *in vitro* evaluation of new investigational antibiotics for potential use against mollicutes in humans. She is a member of the CLSI Subcommittee on Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing of Human Mycoplasmas and participated in the development and standardization of susceptibility testing methods. The resulted CLSI Guideline is now being used throughout the world. Her research is also involved in the investigation of mollicute pathogenesis. She and her colleagues described the complete genome of *M. hominis* and the virulence factors in *M. hominis* and *M. genitalium*.

She is now the Chair of the Department of Bacteriology at the National Reference Center for Chlamydia in the Bordeaux Segalen University and the Bordeaux University Hospital.

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Robert F. Whitcomb Award – for outstanding research in plant and insect mycoplasmaology

2014 Recipient: Dr. Ing-Ming Lee

Dr. Ing-Ming Lee has made continuous and significant contributions to the field of phytoplasmaology throughout his highly distinguished career. Among these are the major research advances in the epidemiology and classification of spiroplasmas, and the establishment of a classification scheme for phytoplasmas based on RFLP analysis.

His innovative research career began in 1971 as a graduate student at the University of California, Riverside, where he pioneered research on citrus stubborn disease. In 1973, the year he received a Master degree, after more than 20 years of unsuccessful searching by entomologists looking for the vector of the citrus stubborn disease causal agent (*Spiroplasma citri*), his novel approach involving direct cultivation of the pathogen from potential insect vector(s) led to his discovery of the first known natural insect vector (*Circuliferte nellus*) of *S. citri*. This discovery was recognized worldwide as a major breakthrough for citrus stubborn disease research, and it opened the way for subsequent work that proved conclusively, for the first time, that a wall-less bacterium was a causal agent of plant disease. This was also recognized internationally as one of his important contributions to understanding the cell wall-less plant pathogenic bacteria of class *Mollicutes* (spiroplasmas and phytoplasmas or MLOs).

In his early work as a postdoctoral researcher, after he obtained a Ph.D. in 1977 from the same University, he developed new media including the first serum-free and chemically defined media, for cultivation of *S. citri*, *S. kunkelii* and other spiroplasmas. In 1987, after his postdoctoral positions at the Rutgers University and at the University of Maryland, he joined the Molecular Plant Pathology Laboratory, ARS, UDDA, Beltsville, as a Research Plant Pathologist. In 1994, he performed the first global phylogenetic analysis. This accomplishment placed phytoplasmas definitively among members of class *Mollicutes* and revealed that phytoplasmas form a large discrete monophyletic clade. Significantly, all subclades corresponded to 16S rDNA RFLP groups previously delineated by him. He proposed that each phylogenetic subclade represented at least one *Phytoplasma* species. This study formed the basis for delineating new genus and species level taxa, and led to the establishment of formal phytoplasma taxonomy in which over 20 'Candidatas Phytoplasma species' have been proposed.

the 2014 IOM Congress, Blumenau, BRAZIL, 1st to 6th June



The International Organization
for Mycoplasmaology



The IOM 2014 Congress website is: <http://iom2014.org/>

Registration to the IOM2014 is now open. The online registration deadline is May 15th; after that you may only register on site. This is due to organizational needs to prepare all of the material for the attendants and the infrastructure for the congress.

Also note that the registration fee has an additional discounted value until February 21st. From February 22nd to May 16th the registration is still reduced. To register on site one will have to pay the full registration fee.

To verify all the details you are invited to check the congress website (<http://iom2014.org/>).

We remind that all those who are required to obtain a VISA to enter Brazil may contact the Local Organizing Committee chair, Prof. Caio Cordova (iom2014@gmail.com) to request an invitation letter, to facilitate the process.

If you need assistance to book your flight and get special hotel rates, do not hesitate to contact our partner travel agency

(<http://www.primundo.com.br/iom2014/orcamento>). You can also arrange with them post or pre congress tours to the amazing destinations that our country has to offer (<http://iom2014.org/2013/09/02/what-to-do-in-brazil/>). A selection of local tours is being scheduled for the congress week as well, especially for accompanying persons.

We are now approaching this exciting congress week, and we are working hard to have everything ready for you, together with an amazing social program, to make your experience in Brazil the most pleasing one.

Sincerely,

Caio Cordova
IOM2014
Chair of the LOC

TRAVEL AWARDS FOR IOM 2014

With regard to travel awards

Just a reminder that students applying for funds are required to have a recommendation letter submitted at the time of their abstract submission, so it would be best to prepare them before the Feb 15th deadline.

Details and instructions for additional travel funds for U.S. students through the NIH will be forthcoming.

As the congress is not in Europe any applications for FEMS awards has to be made by the student directly to FEMS.

FEMS offer meeting Attendance Grants to young European Scientists (under 36) to attend microbiology meetings that are not supported by FEMS 250 to 600 Euros

Objective

- FEMS provides Meeting Attendance Grants to young European scientists wishing to attend microbiology meetings that are not supported by a FEMS Meetings Grant.
- The maximum amount of a Meeting Attendance Grant is EUR 600, the minimum EUR 250. Meeting Attendance Grants may support attendance at meetings worldwide but preference will be given for meetings within the European area.

Application

Young scientists wishing to apply for a Meetings Attendance Grant should first inform themselves of the regulations governing FEMS Meeting Attendance Grants. Complete applications should be received at FEMS Central Office by the **deadline of 1st April**. <http://europeanmicrobiologycouncil.org/website/nl/page64.asp>

Society for Applied Microbiology (Sfam) offer a Scientific Meeting Attendance Grant. Maximum award £300.

The purpose of the Scientific Meeting Attendance Grant is to financially assist members to attend an appropriate applied microbiology scientific meeting. It is also to enable members to 'stay in touch' with the latest research in microbiology whilst on a period of parental leave (maternity/paternity/adoption leave) and when funding is not available elsewhere. A maximum amount of £300 is normally available, increasing to £600 where childcare costs are required.

Applicants may apply for expenses to facilitate their attendance at any appropriate applied microbiology scientific meeting. These costs can include registration, travel, subsistence and where applicable childcare expenses while they are in attendance at the event. **Deadline 7th March**.

<http://www.sfam.org.uk/en/grants--awards/scientific-meeting-attend-grant.cfm>

Society for General Microbiology (SGM) also offer travel grants. Maximum £500 for travel outside of Europe.

- Eligibility: current paid-up Full, Full Concessionary or Postgraduate Student members who have made a minimum of two consecutive membership subscription payments (2013

and 2014) and who have not received a grant from this scheme in the previous calendar year.

- Must be presenting work.

Deadline 1st March.

Full details are on the SGM website:

<http://www.sgm.ac.uk/en/grants-prizes/travel-research-funds.cfm/travel-grants>

IOM WEBSITE INFORMATION

Please check you have the new IOM website address: <http://www.iom-online.org/>

Chris Minion the IOM Information Officer has made some great improvement to the website and it is also easier to pay your IOM membership! Any comments or suggestions for improving the website further are always welcome.

FACEBOOK

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-International-Organization-for-Mycoplasmology/569001343124940?fref=ts>

SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIPS

The IOM introduced sustaining memberships for companies to support the IOM. If you know of other companies who would be interested in supporting the IOM by becoming sustaining members, please let the treasurer know. It is a good way for them to raise their profiles on the IOM website and at the biennial congresses. We thank the following companies for their support:



INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME FOR COMPARATIVE MYCOPLASMOLOGY (IRPCM)

The IRPCM team meetings at the Congress this year in Blumenau will be after the sessions finish on each of the following days:

- Monday June 2: Clinical Aspects of Human Mycoplasmas; Porcine; Avian
- Tuesday June 3: Chemotherapy of Mycoplasma Infections; Spiroplasmas/Phytoplasmas/Mesoplasmas/Entomoplasmas; Ruminant
- Wednesday June 4: Molecular Genetics and Cell Biology; General Diagnostics & Cell Culture; New and Emerging Mycoplasmas

These team meeting will offer participants the opportunity to meet other researchers in their field and to develop collaborations.

I would encourage everyone to participate in the team meetings and to try to ensure that at least one member of your group gets to each of the team meetings relevant to your area of mycoplasmaology.

The team leaders this year are:

IRPCM Team	Team Leader	Email
Avian	Chris Morrow	chris.morrow@bioproperties.com.au
Chemotherapy	Inna Lysnyanskyy	innal@moag.gov.il
Mollicute Contamination in Cell Cultures and Bioproducts	Helena Windsor	mexp@mycoplasma-exp.com
Molecular Genetics	Meghan May	mmay@towson.edu
New and Emerging Mycoplasmas	Ana Ramírez	aramirez@dpal.ulpgc.es
Porcine	Dominiek Maes	dominiek.maes@ugent.be
Ruminants	Ruben Rosales	Ruben.Rosales@ahvla.gsi.gov.uk
Spiroplasmas/Phytoplasmas	Assunta Bertaccini	bertaccini_a@biblio.cib.unibo.it
Clinical Aspects of Human Mycoplasmas	Ran Nir Paz	nirpaz@hadassah.org.il

Yours sincerely,

Glenn Browning
IRPCM Chair

Molecular Genetics and Cellular Biology Team News Item:

At the 19th IOM Congress in Toulouse, the Molecular Genetics and Cellular Biology (MGCB) IRPCM Team discussed the idea of sequencing the genome of at least one strain of all the *Mollicutes* to enhance our understanding of the class and to create a resource helpful to the community that would be shared in an open database. I am pleased to report that a research group from the United States (Mitchell Balish, Daniel Brown, Iddo Friedberg, John Glass, and myself) is in the process of developing and submitting a proposal to fund this effort through the National Science Foundation's Genealogy of Life (GoLife) program (http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf14527). The goal of this program is to "resolve the phylogenetic history of life and to integrate this genealogical architecture with underlying organismal data," which seems extremely well-suited to our proposed effort, which includes not only genome sequencing and analysis but also morphological analysis and creation of a public database integrating the findings. This project will rely heavily on the newly relocated *Mollicutes* Collection of Cultures and Antisera for source material, but additional submissions of field strains from the IOM community would be most welcome. We will continue to work with and report to the IRPCM MGCB Team throughout the effort. This collaboration has taken advantage of some of the unique features of the IOM, - the IRPCM team meetings and the culture collection - and we therefore wish to acknowledge the benefit and support that our organization brings to the discipline of mycoplasmaology. We welcome suggestions...and stock cultures!

Regards,



Meghan May

Team Leader, Molecular Genetics and Cell Biology Team, IRPCM

E mail: mmay3@une.edu