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Dear Microbiology Colleagues,

Although microbiology is not an obvious part of our daily life, microorganisms and the physical and biochemical processes they carry out are, in fact, of fundamental importance to life on earth. Without the constant re-cycling of materials performed by microorganisms the environment on which our society depends simply could not exist. Microorganisms also have detrimental effects on our lives, causing diseases in ourselves, our domestic animals and plants, spoiling our food and impacting our activities in many other ways. Recent developments in microbial genetics have opened the way to using microorganisms and their components as agents for the manufacture of new chemicals for the treatment of disease, for the biological control of pests and as reagents for use in research. Over the past few years the central importance of biology in general, and of microbiology in particular, to the well being of society has become more generally recognised. Microbiology is seen today as probably the most important science as we enter the 21st century, impacting on many aspects of society.

In recent years the multidimensional impact of microbiology has been recognised in Europe; microorganisms affect many aspects of society and the science of microbiology is interwoven into a surprisingly wide range of activities in Europe. The resulting need for microbiologists to interact with professionals from other disciplines presents us with communication difficulties but also with opportunities to contribute to different scientific fields. This attitude is well adopted by the 6th Framework Programme and is planned to be in the next Framework Programme as well. Consequently, there is an urgent need for microbiologists in Europe to consolidate their knowledge and work patterns so that they can more effectively contribute to the Framework Programmes and generally enhance the status of microbiology in Europe. At present various branches of microbiologists in Europe work largely in isolation. The congress of European microbiologists is promoting integration and many spin-offs are anticipated in terms of contacts and shared projects that will be initiated at this event.

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FEMS Meetings Calendar

2003

Enzymes in the Environment: Activity, Ecology, and Applications
2003 July 14-17
Praha, Czech Republic

11th International Congress on Molecular Plant-Microbe Interaction
2003 July 18-26
St. Petersburg, Russia

3rd European Phycological Congress (EPC-3)
2003 July 21-26
Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom

23rd International Specialised Symposium on Yeasts: Interactions between Yeasts and Other Organisms (ISSY-23)
2003 August 26-29
Budapest, Hungary

6th International Meeting on Microbial Epidemiological Markers (IMMEM-6)
2003 August 27-30
Les Diablerets, Switzerland

12th International Workshop on Campylobacter, Helicobacter, and Related Organisms (CHRO-2003)
2003 September 6-10
Aarhus, Denmark

Transformation and DNA Repair
2003 September 7-10
Oslo, Norway

Management and Control of Undesirable Micro-organisms
2003 September 15-18
Manchester, United Kingdom

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This is particularly true for the EuroMicroDay2003 and EuroMicroSquare2003 (June 29, 2003). During EuroMicroDay2003 we will present some of the scientific and research programmes of the European Community, including the Sixth Framework Programme, INTAS programme, COST programme, NATO science programme, and EUREKA programme. Through this, we would especially like to encourage the collaboration of microbiologists among small and medium enterprises and research institutions and stimulate them to jointly participate with new and innovative projects in European research programmes.

We, in Europe, do not have a clear and systematic over-view of the strengths and weaknesses in our understanding, application and exploitation of microbiology. The Declaration on microbiology, which will become public at the 1st FEMS congress of European microbiologists, will provide an excellent tool for evaluating the state of the art in the different areas of microbiology and the impact of the science on society in general.

With the growing recognition of the wide-ranging importance of the subject and of its ability to contribute to a better future for society in Europe, scientists working in the field have expressed a need for a European microbiological event that will open up opportunities for interaction, explore areas of developing knowledge and point the way to future developments. The organisers will take every opportunity of fostering interaction between delegates and, through the EuroMicroDay2003 - which is seen as an important mile-stone in the development of our science - establish a firm basis for future developments.

2003 is for the Federation of European Microbiological Societies and each of its member societies a special year. After many years we have for the first time an opportunity to come together in one place to discuss microbiological issues. FEMS is currently linking 46 microbiological societies. When the strategic planning for the 1st FEMS Congress began in 2001, there were 38 societies under the FEMS umbrella. We are honoured that our organisation is attracting new societies, and with new societies also a new pan European dimension. This congress reflects the cultural and professional diversity and richness of Europe and we are proud to welcome you in Ljubljana.

Professor Dr Peter Raspor.
President of Organising Committee for 1st FEMS Congress.

8th Symposium on Aquatic Microbial Ecology (SAME-8)

2002 October 25–29
Taormina, Messina, Italy

SAME-8 was held in the seaside Sicilian town of Taormina, which lies under Mount Etna that conveniently erupted for the participants during the meeting. It was held in a large hotel in Taormina, which provided comfortable and efficiently serviced facilities.

About 270 scientists were registered and there were many young scientists present who were able to take advantage of the extensive EU support provided for this class of registrants. The meeting had received a FEMS Meeting Support Grant.

There was one plenary lecture given by Hans Pearl (North Carolina, USA), this was a very good lecture, which set a good positive tone for the rest of the meeting. There were two invited keynote speakers for each of the eight half day sessions.

The journal *FEMS Microbiology Ecology* will publish a thematic issue organised from the symposium.



Puppet show: Entertainment in the evening.

2004

International Conference on Arctic Microbiology

2004 March 22–25
Rovaniemi, Finland

Development of Biocontrol Agents on Fungal Diseases for Commercial Applications in Food Production Systems

2004 March 24–27
Sevilla, Spain

Physiology of Yeast and Filamentous Fungi (PYFF-2)

2004 March 24–28
Anglet (near Biarritz), France

Genomes 2004: International Conference on the Analysis of Microbial and Other Genomes

2004 April 21–24
Paris, France

European Symposium on Environmental Microbiology (ESEB 2004)

2004 April 25–28
Oostende, Belgium

4th INRA-RRI Symposium on Gut Microbiology: Concerns and Answers to Food Safety, Health, and Environment

2004 June 7–9
Clermont-Ferrand, France

6th International Conference on Toxic Cyanobacteria

2004 June 21–27
Bergen, Norway

8th Avian Immunology Research Group Meeting

2004 September 4–7
München, Germany

Halophiles 2004

2004 September 4–8
Ljubljana, Slovenia

Acinetobacter 2004

2004 September 15–17
Dublin, Ireland

Recombinant Protein Production: A Comparative View on Host Physiology

2004 November 11–14
Algarve, Portugal

Full information on these meetings at:
www.fems-microbiology.org
> Events > FEMS Meetings



Next FEMS Council will be held in
Ohrid, Macedonia on September 20, 2003.

SARS: Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome 1/2



The late
Dr Carlo Urbani

Carlo Urbani, the Italian epidemiologist who first raised the alarm about the Sars epidemic in Far East Asia, was born 46 years ago in Castelplanio, a little town located in the green hills of the Marche region in central Italy.

He came from a very special family, very active in the community; his father was a professor in the Nautic Institute in Ancona, while his mother, a Sicilian teacher of mathematics, came to Castelplanio to find work in the local school and settled there to start a new family. Carlo was the eldest of three children: from his childhood his life was influenced by his father and mother. From an early age Carlo became active in the local community, like his two parents who were very well known and appreciated for their work for the people of Castelplanio.

A very good student – his professor remembers a serious boy, very concerned about living life with absolute devotion – he began early to collect medicines from the local outpatients departments and send them to poor countries elsewhere in the world. This was an indication of his future employment as a doctor working for international organizations promoting public health in developing countries. Having graduated from the Medical school at the University of Ancona, he specialised in Infectious diseases at the University of Macerata and Messina.

As a student, he travelled extensively from East Europe to Nicaragua, from Nepal to India and Africa. His travelling companions were close friends, of very diverse backgrounds. His international experiences of that time were the start of his involvement in health support to undeveloped countries through international cooperation and, in particular, ONG societies such as the international organization *Mediciens sans frontiere*. As President of that organization he went to Stockholm in 1999 to receive the Nobel Prize for peace on its behalf.

He went on to work for WHO in the Far East. He was living there with his family when the first cases of Sars claimed its earliest victims in Vietnam and then in China. He promptly realized that the atypical pneumonia was a new disease, which could potentially be extremely dangerous. It was he who first alerted WHO. The close contact with patients affected by the disease at the start of the epidemic proved fatal for him. He contracted the pneumonia and died in Bangkok at the end of March 2003.

SARS: A New Infectious Disease

The aetiological agents responsible for the syndrome belong to the family of Corona, viruses responsible for the common cold.

The Corona virus responsible for Sars has probably never been seen before in humans according to the update of WHO; it is a new corona virus. The incredible speed at which the virus was identified is due to the cooperation of several laboratory researchers and to the studies started very promptly under the aegis of WHO. The researchers have set up diagnostic test methods capable, together with clinical and symptomatic features, of confirming or rejecting a case of Sars syndrome. The detection and characterization of the Corona virus responsible for the Sars Syndrome was dedicated, by the network of WHO Laboratories, to the memory of Dr Carlo Urbani.

What is Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome?

According to the WHO definition, Sars is a respiratory syndrome that starts with high fever ($>38^{\circ}\text{C}$), chills, headache and body ache. Dry cough and respiratory problems appear after 2 to 7 days. Some of the patients infected may develop a pneumonia that can be easily detected with X rays: these patients usually need respiratory assistance.

The spread of the disease seems to be connected to a close or direct contact with patients affected by the disease or with their respiratory secretions. It remains possible that the spread could come through other presently undefined ways.

Definition of "Suspect Case of Sars" by WHO

WHO defines a 'suspected' case of Sars as a case of a person who:

- has high fever ($>38^{\circ}\text{C}$) and has one or more respiratory symptoms such as a cough, breathing difficulties and has had close contact with a person who is affected by Sars; has travelled in the last ten days in areas with recent local transmission of Sars; is living in areas with recent local transmission of Sars;
- is a person with unexplained acute respiratory syndrome illness resulting in death after November 2002 on whom no autopsy was performed, with close contacts with a person suspected of Sars, with history of travel to an area endemic for Sars, residing in an area with recent local transmission of Sars.

And a 'probable' case of Sars as a case of a person with:

- radiographic evidence of infiltrates consistent with pneumonia or distress pneumonia;
- a suspect case that is positive for Sars Corona virus by one or more laboratory methods for Sars diagnosis;
- a suspected case with autopsy findings consistent with the pathology of RDS without a cause.

At the moment the diagnosis of Sars is a diagnosis of exclusion.

How can a Sars Case be detected using Laboratory Technology?

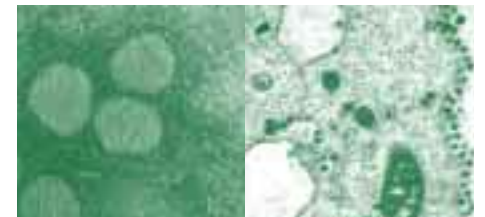
Molecular tests (PCR)

Molecular tests should be performed on two clinical specimens, usually nasopharyngeal and stool specimens or the same specimen could be collected on two different days. Appropriate specimen uptake should be considered: also, all respiratory secretions and body tissues in case of death of the patient. Molecular tests can detect genetic material of the virus in all these different specimens. Primers for the PCR test have been available at the WHO network laboratories: at the moment, the initial experience of the test seems to be inadequate sensitivity, rather than specificity.

Finding of a positive PCR test

A positive test result means that there is a Corona virus gene (RNA) of the Sars-Cov in the sample: the result however does not mean that there is a sufficient amount of virus to infect other patients.

The negative test result means that the patient is not infected or that the result may be a false negative result. Inappropriate sampling may also give false negative results.



Coronavirus from SARS isolated in FRhK-4 cells. Thin section electron micrograph and negative stained virus particles. Source: Department of Microbiology, The University of Hong Kong and the Government Virus Unit, Department of Health, Hong Kong SAR China.

Serological tests

Serological tests include the search for antibodies of class IgG and IgM in the patient sera. The tests, appointed by the WHO task force laboratories, are performed in ELISA or in IFA; data with both methods can demonstrate the first appearance of antibody response in sera, can discriminate between IgG and IgM and detect the degree of positivity of these two classes. Antibodies usually first appear 10 days after the onset of the disease; they remain positive after the patient recovers from pneumonia. Two samples should be taken in the acute and convalescent phase of the disease. A four-fold raise in the titre of antibodies in paired sera can easily demonstrate a seroconversion.

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SARS: Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome 2/2

WHO recommends that PCR testing should be performed only in laboratories that have experience with this method. It is very important that all positive results should be repeated or the result be confirmed by another collaborating research laboratory. The confirmation is crucial in low prevalence areas, where the positive predicted value is lower. The sensitivity of the test is also strictly connected to the specimen and the time in which the test is performed in a patient. All problems connected with false positive tests should be referred to technical problems in the laboratory (contamination). A commercial PCR kit for Sars is now available.

Serological tests are negative in healthy populations: no positive specimens have been found in areas not exposed to the virus. At present, one should consider that a positive serological test cannot be found in a patient serum before ten to fifteen days from the onset of the illness.

How to control Nosocomial Infections due to Sars?

- All suspected cases should be isolated in rooms with independent aeration;

- All air conditioning systems should be turned off if they are not independent;
- All patients who are suspected cases should be isolated until a clear diagnosis is made;
- Health care professionals should wear disposable clothing. In case of reuse of equipment these should be sterilized and cleaned with proper disinfectant;
- In case of transport of a patient to other health care facilities, patients should wear protective masks (Disposable N95 masks);
- Hand washing is the most important procedure to prevent transmission. An alternative can be to wear gloves that are cleaned constantly.

Survey of Virus in the Environment

The survival time of Sars is different in different media.

New studies have reported that the virus can survive 24 hours after drying in plastic bags.

The virus survives 48 hours in faeces; the quantity of virus needed for infection is unknown however. Information about the vitality of the virus strengthens the need for frequent hand washing, proper cleaning

and disinfection control in hospitals managing cases of Sars.

The Sars Epidemic is a challenge in the strategy of treating and defeating infectious diseases. Many other scenarios are present at the moment in the world as far as infectious diseases are concerned. The Sars problem has been addressed and won thanks to the compact team and task force that has operated to face the epidemic under the aegis of WHO. A similar strategy should be followed for other important health issues (Tuberculosis, Malaria, etc.). Infections are worldwide, a common strategy to face illness should be our aim. I hope that in the future a similar way of responding can be considered as a template to look at if we want to win the global fight. It is up to our intelligence and to our professional goodwill.

Dr Daniela Marchetti
Laboratory Department, Bellaria Hospital,
Bologna, Italy.

YOUNG RESEARCHER'S CORNER

Lactobacillus plantarum in Wageningen



Jordan Stoyanov Manasiev

Jordan Stoyanov Manasiev from the Institute of Microbiology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria, spent three months in Wageningen (The Netherlands) at the laboratory of Microbiology in the

W a g e n i n g e n Center for Food Science. He was one of the 33 young microbiologists in 2002 receiving a FEMS Research Fellowship.

Applications for Research Fellowships should be submitted to the FEMS Delegate for approval. The Delegate will then submit approved applications to FEMS. Deadline for receipt at FEMS Central Office: 1 December and 15 June. Every Fellow has to prepare a report within three months after finishing his or her fellowship. For a nice overview of the awarded fellowships, please refer to the FEMS Website at: www.fems-microbiology.org > Research > Fellows. What follows here is taken from the report we received from Dr Manasiev.

Lactobacillus plantarum is a common part of the normal intestinal microflora. The maintenance of the gastrointestinal ecosystem balance is important for the human health. *Lactobacilli* are able to suppress other species by production of several substances. Little is however known about the function of microbial interactions in the GI-tract, especially those regulated by quorum sensing, such as bacteriocin-production. Regulatory mechanisms involved in cell-density dependent gene expression in the GI-tract are expected to be important, because of the high cell densities that we find (10¹¹ CFU/g) and the high bacterial diversity (approximately 400 species). The regulation of bacteriocin synthesis has already been studied intensively in the last years, but other quorum sensing phenomena in lactic acid bacteria less.

Therefore Dr Jordan Stoyanov Manasiev chose to study quorum sensing mechanisms in *Lactobacillus plantarum* WCFS1 – a strain with a completely sequenced and annotated genome. In the Wageningen Center for Food Science (WCFS) its genome has been sequenced and annotated as part of his FEMS Research Fellowship work.

Grant Applications

Applications for *Research Fellowships* should be submitted to the FEMS Delegate for approval. The Delegate will then submit approved applications to FEMS. Deadline for receipt at FEMS Central Office: 1 December and **15 June**.

Applications for *Meeting Grants* should be submitted to the FEMS Delegate of a society in the country where the meeting takes place for approval. Deadline for receipt at FEMS Central Office: **1 March of the preceding year**.

Applications for *Young Scientists Meeting Grants* by young scientists wishing to attend selected FEMS Meetings should be submitted to the meeting organisers. The organisers will then forward the applications to FEMS.

Detailed Regulations and Application Forms are available at the FEMS website: www.fems-microbiology.org.

Online Submission!

As of this year FEMS offers online submission via Manuscript Central®, by ScholarOne, for her complete set of journals, including the rapid turnaround journal FEMS Microbiology Letters. For more information and to submit a manuscript through this online submission, peer review and tracking system go to <http://fems.manuscriptcentral.co>. At the start of May 2003 almost 400 authors had uploaded their articles for FEMS Microbiology Letters via Manuscript Central.



Top 25 Downloads per Journal Available

On the following web links you will find lists that give you an idea about the type of papers that are downloaded most. Please note that the lists only give an indication of the number of downloads per paper because a paper published in April 2002 has a higher chance of appearing in this list than a paper published in December 2002.

The top 25 downloaded papers cover April – December 2002. The URLs are:

FEMSEC <http://www.elsevier.com/homepage/san/downloads/femsec.html>
 FEMSIM <http://www.elsevier.com/homepage/san/downloads/femsim.html>
 FEMSLE <http://www.elsevier.com/homepage/san/downloads/femsle.html>
 FEMSRE <http://www.elsevier.com/homepage/san/downloads/femsre.html>
 FEMSYR <http://www.elsevier.com/homepage/san/downloads/femsyr.html>

FEMS Yeast Research Covered by Medline

Last time we reported that *FEMS Yeast Research* was accepted by ISI and added to the Science Citation Index. Now we can add to this that the new journal has also been accepted for coverage in Medline. As the journal is in its third volume, Medline will go back to Volume 1, Issue 1 with the indexing.



Deputy Chief Editor Appointed

Dr Riks Laanbroek, Editor of FEMS Microbiology Ecology, has been appointed as Deputy Chief Editor for this journal. Dr Laanbroek is located at the Centre for Limnology at the Netherlands Institute of Ecology in Maarseen, The Netherlands. His subject area is aquatic microbiology.



Invitation for Membership of the Editorial Board

I have been asked by several colleagues how one becomes an editor of a journal. To date editors have been nominated by existing editors, FEMS National Delegates, and other distinguished microbiologists. We try to achieve a broad spread of disciplines and nationalities within our small Editorial Board. We will soon be seeking new editors, and we apply high standards. In the interest of fairness and transparency, I invite anyone who wishes to be considered for membership of the Editorial Board, or who wishes to nominate a prospective member, to contact me giving appropriate details. All names will be considered in confidence.

Dr Nigel L. Brown,
 Chief Editor FEMS Microbiology Reviews.
 School of BioSciences, The University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, UK.
 (E-mail: fems-reviews@bham.ac.uk)



Chief Editor FEMS Immunology and Medical Microbiology

In his fifth and final year as Chief Editor (Immunology) for the journal *FEMS Immunology and Medical Microbiology* Dr Loek van Alphen retires. Dr Alex van Belkum, Erasmus MC, Rotterdam, will continue as sole Chief Editor – he joined as co Chief Editor for Medical Microbiology 1.5 years ago.



FEMS Chief Editors 2003



Dr Ralf Conrad,
 Chief Editor
FEMS Microbiology Ecology



Dr Alex van Belkum,
 Chief Editor
FEMS Immunology and Medical Microbiology



Dr Jeff A. Cole,
 Chief Editor
FEMS Microbiology Letters



Dr Nigel L. Brown,
 Chief Editor
FEMS Microbiology Reviews



Ir Lex Scheffers,
 Chief Editor
FEMS Yeast Research

Prof. Dr Hans Veldkamp, FEMS President 1983–1986



Professor Hans Veldkamp

On Monday December 23, 2002 Professor Hans Veldkamp, Emeritus Professor of Microbiology at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands, passed away in his hometown Paterswolde, close to Groningen. He almost reached the age of 80 years.

Hans Veldkamp was Chairman of the Federation of European Microbiological Societies from 1983 to 1986 during which period *FEMS Microbiology Ecology* commenced publication in 1985 with Veldkamp as Chief Editor. He guided the new journal with great enthusiasm during its formative years.

Professor Veldkamp was founder and first chairman of the Department of Microbiology of the University of Groningen. He studied biology at the University of Leiden and Amsterdam during and after the Second World War.

During his studies he became fascinated by the large diversity of species and metabolism of bacteria. Since the University of Leiden lacked a Department of Microbiology he decided to continue his studies at the Technical University of Delft where he studied the oxidation of ethyleneglycol by bacteria under the supervision of Professor Albert-Jan Kluyver. At the Department of Microbiology of the University of Wageningen he worked on his PhD, which he completed in 1955 with the thesis *A study of the aerobic decomposition of chitin by micro-organisms*. In Delft and during a sabbatical leave with – life-long friend – Kees van Niel in Pacific Grove in California the foundations were laid for his career in teaching and research in microbiology along the lines of the “Delft School of Microbiology”.

In 1963 he was invited to become Professor of Microbiology at the University of Groningen with the task of establishing a Department of Microbiology. This Department was initially accommodated in the Medical School but moved in 1969 to its present location in the Biology Centre in Haren. His excellence in teaching and communication attracted many students and PhD's both from biology and (bio)chemistry. Around 1980 the department had grown to about 100 staff members with Prof. Hans Veldkamp and two other professors, i.e. Wim Harder and Wil Konings. Hans remained the linking factor and was known in the department as “the Prof”.

Hans Veldkamp was a microbiologist with a broad interest and knowledge of the diversity and variation of the microbial world. His specialisation was the (aut)ecology and ecophysiology of bacteria. He was particularly fascinated by the competition of bacteria under growth-limiting conditions. The research field was diverse and ranged from psychrophiles to phototrophs, from heterotrophs to chemolithotrophs and from butyric acid to lactic acid bacteria. He initiated several research lines of which some lasted for many years. Veldkamp also recognized the importance of continuous cultivation for a quantitative analysis of the ecology and ecophysiology of bacteria. For many years he strongly advocated the advantages of continuous cultures and performed pioneering research in this area.

After his retirement at the age of 63 he focused on his favourite hobby of bird watching. Regularly he went to an inlet of the Waddensea, the Lauwersmeer, to observe migrating birds, an activity that offered him great joy. Gradually his health problems increased but he retained a sharp mind and enjoyed life until his last moments. The tremendous support offered by his wife Toek made it possible for him to enjoy the limited features that life had to offer him in this difficult period. His many students, co-workers and FEMS Officers will remember Hans Veldkamp with respect and gratitude as a self-willed and great scientist.

(Based on obituary written on December 26, 2002, by Dr Wil N.Konings, Haren and Dr J. Gijs Kuenen, Delft.)

Marian Mordarski, President of FEMS 1986–1989, died February 4, 2003 in Wrocław



Professor Marian Mordarski

Professor Mordarski was vice-Chairman of FEMS from 1975 to 1980 and – following Hans Veldkamp – the fifth President of FEMS (1986–1989). Undoubtedly we have to consider him as one of those pioneers of 1975, who founded FEMS. His role was extremely important then because FEMS set out to bring microbiologists from all European countries together, not only those from politically western oriented countries. In a way Mordarski's role was a

key role for the microbiologists behind the Iron Curtain, a role that he fulfilled with great diplomacy and elegance. His activities laid the basis for the entrance of many other eastern countries into FEMS. His personal qualities, uniting strength with a warm sympathetic character and a clear view into the future, made him an excellent and successful president.

Marian Mordarski was born in Nowy Sacz, Poland, November 10, 1927. Before the end of World War II he became a member of the underground Polish Home Army under the secret name Eagle, and was decorated with several medals. He studied biology at the University of Wrocław from 1948 to 1953 and received his PhD there in 1956. Soon he became professor and already in 1962 he was Head of the Department of Microbiology of Wrocław University (until 1999) and spent a postdoctoral period 1963/64 at the Sloan Kettering Institute for Cancer Research in New York, USA, in between. From 1986 to 1999 he served as Director of the Institute for Immunology and Experimental Therapy of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Wrocław.

Marian Mordarski's name will not be forgotten in scientific research either. His scientific field of interests and work were the actinomycetes and the staphylococci. Besides his over 150 publications in highly ranking journals his work comprises the co-edition of "The Biology of the Actinomycetes" (1984) and of "Actinomycetes in Biotechnology" (1998). Consequences were memberships in editorial boards of several international journals, in scientific councils (National Institute of Hygiene, Warsaw, Department of Human Genetics, Poznań, and honours like membership in the Polish Academy of Sciences and an honorary professorship of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Yunnan University.

FEMS and the European community of microbiologists have suffered a great loss. We mourn together with his widow, Prof. Anna Przondo-Mordarski and his family.

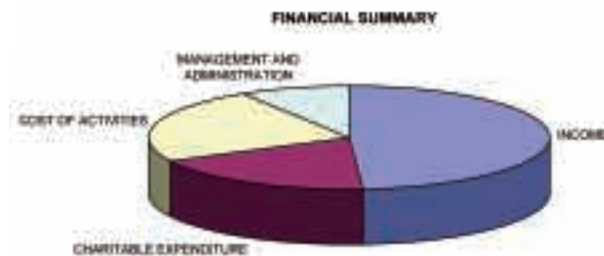
Dr Hans G. Trüper, FEMS President.

Financial Report for 2002

The year 2002 saw a further development of the two main initiatives mentioned in the Annual Review for 2001; the consolidation of part of our publications activity into the Central Office in Delft, and the planning and build-up to the Federation's first European congress. Both initiatives have developed well during the year under review. A considerable amount of the editorial work connected with our journals is now carried out in Central Office and the advantages of this, and the introduction of a comprehensive on-line system for manuscript submission, are beginning to show in terms of increased paper submission rates and decreased editorial costs. It will, however, be some time before the costs of initiating this phase in the development of our publications activity are fully recouped.

One of the stipulations made by Council in 2001 was that our expansion plans should in no way jeopardise our normal level of charitable expenditure on grants. During the year FEMS supported 13 meetings either with meetings support grants or with young scientists grants or both. The total sum was 158,037 euros, which included a grant of 30,000 euros to support the International Union of Microbiological Societies Congress in Paris. Fellowships were awarded to 33 microbiologists to assist them to spend time working in laboratories in countries other than their own. They received an average of 2,103 euros each.

FEMS has continued its policy of providing journals free of charge to various institutions in the East European countries. We are aware that this is a much-appreciated form of special assistance to those areas of Europe. The cost of this service was 29,764 euros during the year under review.



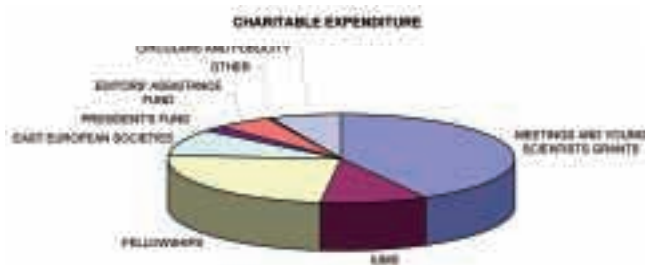
Grants payable in furtherance of the Federation's objectives for the year totalled 284,772 euros.

One element of the expansion plans of the Federation is to increase our influence and value in Europe by forming working links with commercial organisations and governmental agencies. In order to do this effectively it is necessary to redefine our membership criteria. Changes to the Articles of Association, agreed at Council in 2002 have paved the way for this and a small working party, established during the year, is actively developing proposals for new forms of membership.

At the year-end both the new publications office and the first European congress, to be held in Slovenia in 2003, were developing according to their business plans. The congress has already brought together many people working on the Organising and Scientific Programme Committees. The event is attracting a great deal of attention and promises to be a landmark in the future development of the Federation. We will continue to manage the financial affairs of the Federation prudently, keeping a careful watch on the effects of the current uncertainties in the financial markets. Defensive changes have been made to our investment portfolio, but until the current uncertainties in World affairs are resolved it is clear that stock markets are unlikely to recover their former buoyancy and we, like many other organisations, will need to monitor our reserves and cash flow carefully.

At the year-end reserves stood at 1,077,116 euros, a level that is judged to be adequate to sustain our present level of activity and our plans for the immediate future, without jeopardising the long-term health of the Federation.

Dr John Norris, FEMS Treasurer.



INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

New FEMS Delegate for Swedish Society for Microbiology

Dr Mari Norgren, Umeå University, represented the "Svenska föreningen för mikrobiologi" (Swedish Society for Microbiology) for the past seven years. She has now passed the honour to Dr Per-Eric Lindgren, working at Division of Medical Microbiology, Department of Molecular and Clinical Medicine, Linköping University.

Dr Lindgren's major research is within the field of molecular microbial ecology. His research group is addressing questions on diversity, community structure and ecological function of nitrifying bacteria in the environment. One study focuses on the effects by liming and clear cutting in forestry management on the activity of nitrifying bacteria and their population dynamics in acid coniferous forest soils.

Another study deals with the nitrifying bacteria in wastewater treatment processes and the molecular interactions between gram-positive bacteria and the host organisms. The immunological host response of Staphylococcus aureus infections and expression of virulence factors by the bacteria are also investigated.

Full contact details of the new FEMS delegate can be found at the FEMS website.

Dr Karl-Eric Magnusson, Treasurer, Swedish Society for Microbiology.

(advertisement)

Meeting SFM

The "Société Française de Microbiologie" (French Society of Microbiology) will have its 6th meeting in Bordeaux on May 10–12, 2004.

Nine sessions will cover the following topics:

- Antimicrobial agents
- Microbial ecology
- Genetics and physiology
- Clinical microbiology (human and animals)
- Food microbiology
- Industrial microbiology and biotechnology
- Mycology
- Taxonomy
- Virology and clinical virology

An additional open session will also take place and a round table of the "epistemology and history of microbiology" group is planned.

For additional information please contact:

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Belarusian Society reports on Workshop

The Workshop on "Modern methods of viral and bacterial infections diagnosis and detection of infectious agents in environment" took place in Minsk (the Republic of Belarus) on April 3–4, 2003. The Belarusian Research Institute for Epidemiology and Microbiology (BRIEM) and Belarusian Scientific Medical Society of Epidemiologists, Microbiologists and Parasitologists (BSMSEMP) organized the workshop. There were 11 presentations on the topical problems of laboratory diagnostics of intestinal bacterial infections and modern trends in the control for viral and parasitical infections in the Republic.



Special part of the workshop was dedicated to practical training on using diagnostic kits and kits for detection of infectious agents in water, developed by BRIEM.

In the workshop 52 diagnosticians from the Republican Center for Hygiene, Epidemiology and Public Health, the State Medical University and Regional Centers for Hygiene and Epidemiology, laboratories for water-supplies and hospitals participated.

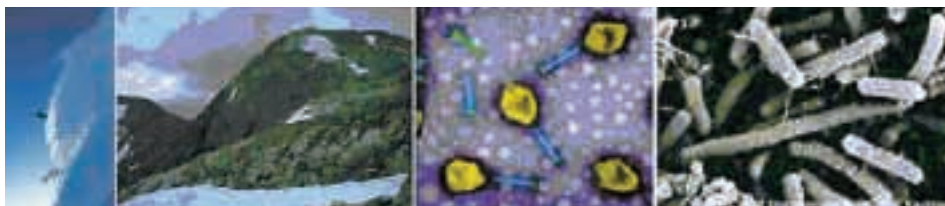
Practical Anaerobic Bacteriology Courses are a Big Hit!



The Society for Anaerobic Bacteriology has just held its fifteenth two-day practical course on clinical anaerobic bacteriology. The courses are held mainly in Cardiff and have proven very popular as each time they are fully booked and have a waiting list. The course is aimed at practising biomedical scientists who wish to improve their skills with anaerobic bacteria of clinical importance. On the first day delegates receive lectures on basic principles of clinical anaerobic bacteriology and in the afternoon get hands-on experience with 12 unknown anaerobic pathogens to identify.

Day two includes lectures on the key anaerobic genera of clinical importance and completion of the practical. There are also demonstrations and the highlight in the evening is the dinner followed by a light-hearted anaerobic quiz. The next course is planned for September 2003 in Hull. Anyone interested in attending should contact the course convenor Mr. Ken Denton at: Ken@bioconnections.co.uk.

Winter-meeting of The Norwegian Society for Microbiology



The traditional winter-meeting was arranged at Park Hotel in Voss from the 6th to the 9th of February 2003. Altogether 70 microbiologists from different institutions in Norway attended the conference which included both oral and poster sessions. The oral sessions comprised general and applied microbiology, vector born infections, virus infections, food microbiology, antibiotic resistance and oil reservoir microbiology. A special session concerned the establishment of the Norwegian Network for Microbiology. Professor Sven Bergström, Department of Molecular Biology, Umeå University, Sweden and Professor Geoffrey C. Schild, the Society for General Microbiology, United Kingdom were the only foreign speakers. Professor Bergström talked about *Biology of Borrelia; immune evasion*

and reactivation of infection. Borrelia shuttles between hematophagous arthropods and vertebrates. When they move from an arthropod to a vertebrate, they are changing from an environment with no antibody-based immune system to an environment where the immunological pressure is high. Professor Schild talked about *Regulatory research; an update on scientific progress in the regulation of viral and bacterial vaccines.* A review of the salient principles and procedures applied in vaccine manufacture to secure quality, safety and batch-to-batch consistency was given. It is of critical importance that the laboratory methods used in the quality control of vaccines keep up with the state-of-art science and technology.

International Biodeterioration and Biodegradation Society

IBBS are pleased to announce that Prof Harold Rossmore has taken a well-earned retirement from his post as Editor in Chief of the IBB Journal. To honour the work that Harold has put in to the Society, IBBS council have awarded Harold "Life Membership" and renamed our annual student Bursary awards after him. In addition to this Diane Band was also recently awarded "Life Membership" of the society in recognition of her seventeen years service to the society in her role as membership secretary.

Our next scientific meeting will be held in Manchester (September 15–18, 2003) on "Management and control of undesirable microorganisms" and will be a joint meeting with IBRG. The meeting has received sponsorship from FEMS Young Scientist Support Grant and we hope to attract a high calibre of students from across Europe as we did for our meeting in Prague last year. At that meeting the panel of international judges awarded first prize in the Young Scientist Poster Competition to Hana Novakova from ICT, Prague, Czech Republic, for her poster entitled "Degradation of PCB by *Pseudomonas* sp strain P2". The Manchester organising committee is working hard and looking forward to welcoming many international scientists to the meeting for a programme involving excellent presentations and an interesting social diary in the heart of Manchester (see www site for details).



Hana Novakova receives her FEMS Poster award from Prof. Katerina Demnerova and Dr Jimmy Walker.

Dr Jimmy Walker.
President of IBBS
(www.biodeterioration.org).

New FEMS delegate for The Norwegian Society for Microbiology: Dr Gudmund Holstad.



Changes in the Society for Applied Microbiology



Lynne Boshier, Events & Office Manager SfAM.

In July 2002 Dr Peter Silley took office as Honorary President and Lynne Boshier joined the Society's head office as Events & Office Manager. December 2002 saw the striking first edition of the *excellent* "Microbiologist", a full colour, high quality, quarterly *members'* magazine featuring articles, reviews and reports on meetings along with some light-hearted crosswords and caption competitions. This was received extremely well, much to the delight of Dr Anthony

Hilton, editor and creator of the new look publication.

In January 2003 the SfAM held a very successful meeting at the Holiday Inn Birmingham and is now busy putting the final touches to the July conference in Guildford – "Microbiology of Engineered Environments".

January 2004 will see the meeting "Microbial Interactions with Medical devices: a matter of life and death" taking place at the Marriott Hotel, Newcastle and this will be followed by the 2004 summer meeting in Cork in July. Full details can be found on SfAM website www.sfam.org.uk. The SfAM is awaiting the forthcoming launch of a brand new inter-active website with a dynamic new look and extensive fields of information, including job opportunities and on-line booking facilities.

The Versatility of *Listeria* Species

2002 October 10–11
Izmir, Turkey

This FEMS Symposium was organized by The Turkish Microbiological Society and the Department of Microbiology and Clinical Microbiology, Faculty of Medicine, Ege University, Izmir.

In total 93 scientists from 14 countries (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Island, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Switzerland, The United Kingdom, and Turkey) participated in the meeting.

The scientific programme consisted of 15 invited papers (conferences), one round-table discussion, and 36 free papers (posters). The abstracts of invited and free papers are compiled in a book of 80 pages published by The Turkish Microbiological Society. The full manuscripts of the invited papers are already published in the *FEMS*

Immunology and Medical Microbiology 2003, Volume 35 (3).

On behalf of The Turkish Microbiological Society I thank FEMS for giving us the chance to organize this symposium in Turkey and for supporting us in every way. We also thank Prof. Dr Hans Trüper for attending the meeting as FEMS representative. We also extend our thanks to Prof. Dr Herbert Hof, Symposium President, who helped us in forming the scientific program of the meeting as well as to all invited speakers and participants. Particularly international meetings like this past symposium, beside sharing scientific knowledge, indeed help us to understand each other better – for a better world for all! Again many thanks to all participants for creating these valuable opportunities!

Prof. Dr Emel Tümbay, Secretary General of the Symposium.



Participants at the *Listeria* meeting. In the first row Prof. Dr Herbert Hof is 4th from the left and Prof. Dr Emel Tümbay is 3rd from the left.

General Kazimierz Sosnkowski: The Creator of the First International Prohibition of Bacteriological Weapon Usage

Following bioterroristic attacks on USA the world today faces an unknown and dangerous threat not only from dictators such as Saddam Hussein, but also from terrorist groups who may possess unknown quantities of biological weapons. In the aftermath of the Iraq conflict and with an uncertain future concerning biological weapons, it is now a good occasion to review the history of the international law against the usage of bacteriological weapons. The first such legal deed constructed during one of the conferences organized after World War I under the auspices of the League of Nations, was the Geneva Protocol of 1925.

The flow of stormy events since the Geneva Conference in 1925 has erased, even among specialists and historians, the memory of the achievements of the Polish delegation in introducing and signing the Protocol on the prohibition of the use of bacteriological weapons.

How did this happen? At the beginning of the conference the American delegation presented the proposal of the prohibition of the sale and export of all combat gases and their analogues produced for military purposes under the risk of sanctions agreed by the signatory countries. The Polish original proposal on the prohibition of bacteriological weapons said: "To supplement the suggestion of the American delegation on means of chemical war and taking into consideration the fact that the means of bacteriological war constitute a shameful weapon of the modern civilization, the Polish delegation suggests to apply the decisions of the Conference on chemical weapon to the bacteriological ones, too". In the course of the debate, some delegates rose to speak bringing amendments but only to the subject of chemical weapons. So did the reports from commission discussions. The omission of bacteriological weapons was protested against by the Chief of the Polish delegation, General Sosnkowski, whose statement (see special section at the right) was the merit of the Polish delegation proposal.

General Sosnkowski speech was followed by a lively discussion. The first to take the floor was the USA representative who explained that the subject of the bacteriological weapon was not included into the instructions he got from his government. Still he agreed that it was his responsibility and competence to consider the subject as: "...the bacteriological war, cruel and disgusting, must be condemned by all civilized nations and that is why the American delegation accepts and confirms the amendment brought by the Polish delegation". The representative of France also supported the Polish suggestion. The

General Sosnkowski said: "On behalf of the Polish delegation I would like to draw the Conference members attention to the fact that the bacteriological weapon has been omitted from the Protocol on chemical weapon. It might have been simply overlooked and therefore, I suggested to apply all statements on chemical weapon to the bacteriological ones. I do not want to exaggerate in forecasting all consequences of the use of bacteriology, which as a science itself has got plenty of beneficial achievements, but might be threatening to mankind if driven by hatred and destruction. Let me have the freedom then to point to the evident progress in this field. We must not forget that before the war it had been purely theoretical to consider the use of asphyxiant gases at war.....

The consequences of the bacteriological weapon use proved to be much more dangerous than all devastation caused by gases during the war. Bacteriological materials produced for war purposes reached an enormous development in recent years, which enables the production of a really terrifying system of destruction. The bacteriological weapon has advantage over the chemical one of being produced easily, cheaply and in a secret.....

It is enough to start a minimum operation with the bacteriological weapon to arrive at much more terrifying and everlasting results. The bacterial culture, in contrast to poison gases limited in space and lifetime, can be released secretly regardless the place of diffusion because of its rapid growth and it may cause devastating human, animal and plant populations.....

Not only armed forces and parties at war are affected by the consequences of the bacteriological war but also the civilian population, even against the will of fighting parties, who are not able to foresee the spread of the weapons. Is it possible then to protect us from future wars, which put us in danger of being exterminated? For the sake of civilization and humanity we must not let it happen. Bacteriological warfare is doubly dangerous because it can be conducted in secret, by use of primitive means and it can use indistinguishable carriers. At the back of the front line, from a very distant place, secret agents can infect inhabitants, water, and food directly or indirectly, by the use of such carriers as domestic animals or parasites or by the use of bacteriological bombs dropped by airplanes. Chemical weapons which require a lot of equipment cannot obtain similar effects with any single agent. It is, therefore, much simpler to act with the bacteriological weapons where a single man with a culture of bacteria in a small ampoule may achieve unpredictable results. Although medicine has made great progress in recent years it still cannot protect man from the barbarous fight. Both the physical and moral consequences of war would be terrifying and would manifest in the extermination of people, animals and plants....

Taking these factors into consideration, I would like to propose the introduction of the following supplement into the protocol: "All contracting parties as well as all the others who so far have not become parties of the treaty forbid the use of chemical weapons, acknowledge that prohibition, expand it to cover the bacteriological weapons and appeal to liaise in this subject".

Many ideas of this statement are still actual and interesting, regardless the time passed, and are worth quoting with some abbreviations.

representative of China said that the Conference achieved more than it had been designed to achieve in its programme. Thanks to American and Polish initiatives chemical and bacteriological wars had been condemned, forbidden and understood by all respected world powers to be barbarous and not accepted by contemporary civilization. The Romanian representative spoke in the same way and said: "The Protocol of the use of the chemical and bacteriological weapon initiated by American and Polish delegations is the biggest achievement and will meet the world's appreciation". He suggested that the prohibition of bacteriological weapons was added to the agenda by the Polish delegation. At the summing up stage of the Conference the achievements of the prohibition of

chemical and bacteriological weapons were mentioned again but only in the form of praise of the initiators. The chairman of the final session congratulated the USA and Polish delegations on their initiative and emphasized empathetically: "I will support every effort to stop any attempt of turning the world into ruins while chemical and bacteriological wars are only episodes and modals of the same destructive soul of our societies." General Sosnkowski, who rose to speak next, expressed his happiness to find representatives of the great American democracy among the Conference members and said that the Polish delegation was the first to join a noble initiative of the American delegation. He believed that "... the prohibition guaranteed by the Protocol will soon become part of international law."

Today we have various reflections about the materials of the Geneva Conference 78 years ago. The noble diplomatic approaches by the Polish delegation have not been successful although the Convention on bacteriological and chemical weapons has been signed. The Convention on bacteriological weapon states that high contracting parties will never and under no circumstances start production, storage of biological materials nor will undertake any other activities related to them. Still the accusation of production, storage and danger of use of the bacteriological means of war are being observed among members of military conflicts and other trouble spots. General Sosnkowski's appeal "Not to allow bacteriology to be driven by instincts of hatred and destruction" is still very actual and valid.

The 75th anniversary of signing the Geneva Protocol was celebrated in 2000. The Polish Microbiologists' Society decided to especially commemorate this to recall this anniversary in memory of the USA and Polish initiatives in setting up the prohibition of mass destruction wars. To this end, the society together with the Military Health Service raised the funds over several years for a commemorative plaque of General Sosnkowski.

On the 4th of November 2000 a memorial mass for Gen. K. Sosnkowski was celebrated in the Cathedral of Polish Army in Warsaw. The ceremony was attended by the representatives of the National Safety Office and Ministry of National Defense, a group of scholars from the world of medicine and officers of the Military Health Service. Also attending the ceremony was a group of international experts, which was then debating the methods of reinforcement of the bacteriological weapons convention at NATO Advanced Research Workshop in Warsaw.



On the plaque there is the bust of Gen. K. Sosnkowski along with an inscription which in translation into English reads as follows: "In eternal memory among coming generations of Gen. K. Sosnkowski and his magnificent deed of establishing the international ban on bacteriological weapons as set forth in the Geneva Protocol 1925. In the jubilant year 2000 of the Christian era and the 75th anniversary of the Protocol signing."

Beneath that inscription there are mentioned as initiators of the project from left to right: The Polish Microbiologists Society and the Military Health Service.

The president of this workshop, Prof. G. Pearson (UK) described this event in ASA Newsletter No 6 from 2000 as follows: ".....The Workshop was notable also because the participants were present in the Field Cathedral of Polish Army in Warsaw for the service during which a plaque was unveiled to commemorate the contribution of Polish General K. Sosnkowski to the introduction of a ban on bacteriological weapons in the Geneva Protocol of 1925. It was a real honour to be able to be present at this historic occasion marking the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Protocol of 1925.....".

The contribution of Gen. K. Sosnkowski to the cause of establishing the first international ban on biological weapon is mentioned in the article entitled: "The birth of Prohibition of chemical and bacteriological weapons use" by J. Mierzejewski published in the ASA Newsletter No 2 from 1999 as well as in the chapter entitled "Poland and biological weapons" of the book "Biological and toxic weapons: research, development and use from the middle ages to 1945" published by SIPRI (Stockholm) in the Chemical and Biological Studies 18.

The commemorative plaque constitutes a durable record of Polish national achievements in the diplomatic world, and the international society. It is well known that the Geneva Protocol from 1925 is a legal deed still in force, signed by almost all countries. If we take into consideration the uncertain spread of bacteriological weapons, especially in Iraq now, and a forecast of intensifying international terrorism (also with the use of bacteriological means), the speech of Gen. Sosnkowski, that "for the sake of civilization we cannot allow anyone to use bacteriology to barbaric purpose" is still actual and convinces that the General's merits in stating the first international ban on bacteriological weapons usage were really impossible to overvalue.

Prof. Dr Jerzy Mierzejewski.
Honorary Member of Polish Microbiologists Society.
(Email: mierzjer@poczta.onet.pl)

CENTRAL OFFICE

Building Congress Organising Competence

FEMS Council enthusiastically supported the idea to initiate a series of FEMS Congresses, and build the necessary expertise to support such congresses now and in future. It was a logical Executive decision to start developing a Congress Bureau as a new division within FEMS Central Office. Expertise gained at one congress should not be lost but instead be used to improve a next congress.

To this end, a modest, but vigorous start was made to develop such Congress Bureau, which would work side-by-side with the Congress Centre in Ljubljana. Activities, for which expertise was already available at Central Office or those of strategic importance for FEMS, would be supported from the Delft office. Integration of congress with other office

activities proved to be efficient, also because of Prof. Peter Raspor's roles both as chair of the organising committee and as executive committee member responsible for Central Office.

The Congress Bureau, in statu nascendi, took up responsibility for Exhibition & Sponsorship, Abstracts, and Grants. Other organisational support was also provided, amongst which are usage of the FEMS database, and support for the Press Office.

These labour-intensive tasks were performed by members of staff, notably Wilma van Wezenbeek (Publications Officer), Margarita Pérez and myself, and also by the temporary employees Colin Davey and Floor Jansen.

The success of these new activities is a strong basis for further developing congress organising expertise. The Congress Bureau is gearing up to support future FEMS Congresses and likely also other microbiology events.



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