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Vertical Transmission



Keryn Christiansen

President ASM

The Melbourne meeting is drawing close. The local Melbourne organising committee, NSAC and the Rubbo Committee have put together an excellent programme and outstanding speakers.

The opening ceremony will set the benchmark for the rest of the meeting. Professor Peter Doherty will speak on *The role of leadership in changing times*. Professor Doherty, who won the Nobel Prize in Medicine and Physiology together with Rolf Zinkernagel, discovered how T cells recognise their target antigens in combination with major histocompatibility complex (MHC) proteins. Professor Doherty is currently an NHMRC Burnet Fellow and Laureate Professor in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Melbourne. While maintaining an active research programme, he is also an advocate for innovation, liberal education and the role of science in the community. He has published two books for the general public, his semi-autobiographical book *The beginner's guide to winning the Nobel Prize* and, more recently, *A light history of bot air*. I'm sure all attendees of the meeting will look forward to this fantastic start to ASM 2008.

The Rubbo Oration this year will be given by Professor Alan Cowman, Division Head, Infection and Immunity at the Walter & Eliza Hall Institute, Melbourne. He works predominantly on *Plasmodium falciparum*, the causative agent of the most severe form of malaria, with the aim of understanding how it infects humans and the mechanisms used to evade the host immune response.

Lastly, the Bazeley Oration will be delivered by Dr Mike Levine. He is the Director of the Center for Vaccine Development at the University of Maryland, School of Medicine in the USA. He is an advocate for the development of vaccines that provide mucosal immunisation. His basic laboratory research has focused on the use of attenuated *Salmonella typhi* as a live oral vaccine, while his clinical research has involved the assessment of multiple vaccines in adults and children.

The conference programme contains many other high calibre speakers, a day devoted to infection control and much, much more. I urge you to check the ASM website for details of the programme, to submit your research work and to attend the meeting. This is a wonderful opportunity to share and learn new information and ideas, to network with colleagues working in related areas and to have great social interactions with friends and co-workers.

Another meeting for your diary is the Tri-State meeting. This meeting, which brings together microbiologists from South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia, will be held in Alice Springs in September this year. Again, check the ASM website for details.

The ACT branch recently approached the ASM Executive with a request to merge with the New South Wales branch. This has now been completed. An ACT representative will sit on the amalgamated branch to represent the ACT ASM members. The NSW branch is a very active branch and I'm sure will have much to offer their newly acquired members.

Your ASM Executive Committee continues to work on your behalf. There is much day-to-day activity requiring Executive input or action. We are currently updating the constitution to reflect the changes that have occurred over the last decade and to allow us to enter the electronic era with on-line voting. These changes will be taken to the Council and then to the membership for acceptance at the Annual General Meeting. Other matters before the Executive are the ASM-SGM student scholarship that has been now agreed to by both Societies, Science Meets Parliament and the restructure of the National Office. We will continue to work for our members and hopefully provide you with a vital, growing Society relevant to your needs. I hope to meet many of you again in Melbourne in July.