

ASM2009 Awards

The Australian Society
for **Microbiology**
bringing Microbiologists together



2009 Frank Fenner Award

Associate Professor Elizabeth Harry



Associate Professor Liz Harry is a principal investigator at the Institute for the Biotechnology of Infectious Diseases (IBID) at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS).

After obtaining her PhD at the University of Sydney, she was a postdoc (NIH fellow) at Harvard University, where she pioneered the development of fluorescence microscopy techniques for 'seeing' where proteins are in a bacterial cell. These techniques have revolutionised our view of the internal organisation of bacterial cells. Liz was then an Australian Research Council (ARC) postdoctoral fellow and then an ARC QEII fellow at the University of Sydney.

Her research focuses on how bacterial cells multiply and how they control this process to ensure equal partitioning of chromosomes vital for survival. She works with industry to develop novel antibiotics that target this process.

In 2002 Liz was awarded the Australian Eureka Prize for Scientific research. Associate Professor Liz Harry will deliver the following presentations:



2009 bioMérieux ASM Identifying Resistance Award

Geoffrey Coombs



Geoff Coombs is the Principal Medical Scientist of the PathWest Department Microbiology and Infectious Diseases at Royal Perth Hospital and the Gram-positive Bacteria Typing and Research Unit. The Unit is the state's reference centre for the epidemiological typing of MRSA and VRE

isolated in Western Australia and is involved in several national and international studies.

Geoff's major areas of research include:

- Investigating the molecular evolution of West Australian community MRSA.
- Characterising toxin determinants in Australian community MRSA. (PhD thesis: Curtin University of Technology, Perth.)

- Developing sequenced-based methods for the characterisation of MRSA.
- Antimicrobial resistance surveillance.

He has published over 40 papers in reviewed journals and has submitted over 130 abstracts at national and international meetings. In addition he has been invited to present at several national and international conferences. In the course of his professional career he has received several awards, including an Australian Society for Microbiology Foundation Scholarship (1996) and the Australian Society for Antimicrobials/AstraZeneca Award (2000). In 2006 he received a Distinguished Service Award from the Australian Society for Microbiology (ASM).

He is an Executive Committee Member for the Australian Group for Antimicrobial Resistance (AGAR) and the Australian Society for Antimicrobials (ASA), a Medical Testing Assessor for the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) and a Member (ASM representative) of the NATA Medical Testing Accreditation Advisory Committee. He has participated in several international and national conference organising committees and was an Advisory Board Member of the 10th (Japan), 11th (USA) and 13th (Australia) International Symposia on Staphylococci and Staphylococcal Infections.



2009 Pfizer ASM Mycology Encouragement Award

Anna Lau



Anna's current area of research focuses on the development of new, rapid diagnostic platforms for invasive fungal infections.

To date, her research has led to the development of the first and only broad-range PCR assay available in Australia for the direct detection of fungi in clinical specimens.

She has also developed two multiplex-tandem PCR platforms for the successful identification of fungi from blood and culture samples. At ASM2009 she presented work comparing MT-PCR detection of *Candida* from whole blood, serum and plasma samples obtained from patients with proven candidemia to determine whether time to diagnosis could be expedited.

Results showed earlier diagnosis by PCR compared to blood culture and highlighted differences in the kinetics of DNA release of yeast pathogens *in vivo*, supporting the theory that recovery of free DNA from serum and plasma samples are promising alternatives for diagnosing bloodstream infections caused by yeasts.

2009 Roche Molecular Diagnostic Award

Award-winner

Liping Wang

(photo not provided at time of printing)

2009 BD ASM Student Award-winners



Victoria
Kheng Hui Tan



Queensland
Jeremy Barr



Tasmania
Richard Bradbury



New South Wales
Xiao Yang



South Australia
Michael Taylor



Western Australia
Jamie
Summerfield

2009 Honorary FASM Awards

Nobel Laureate Professor Barry Marshall AC



Nobel Prize (Physiology and Medicine 2005)
Professor of Clinical Microbiology
University of Western Australia, Perth WA
Co-Director, Marshall Centre for Infectious
Disease Research & Training
Companion of the Order of Australia, 2007

Together with Dr Robin Warren, Professor Barry Marshall was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2005 “for their discovery of the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori* and its role in gastritis and peptic ulcer disease.” The Nobel Committee added:

Thanks to the pioneering discovery by Marshall and Warren, peptic ulcer disease is no longer a chronic, frequently disabling condition, but a disease that can be cured by a short regimen of antibiotics and acid secretion inhibitors.

Today, Barry Marshall is the Clinical Professor of Microbiology and Medicine at the University of Western Australia. In recent years, his research has illuminated the patterns of helicobacter infection in different populations around the world. In more developed countries, with adequate supplies of clean drinking water, the rate of infection is declining, but it persists in less developed countries and among recent immigrants from those countries. It is probably the most widespread chronic infection in the world and is nearly universal in the world’s poorest countries.

Thanks to Dr Marshall’s work, helicobacter is now recognised as a major factor in the development of stomach cancer. Once the most common of cancers, stomach cancer has declined precipitously in the developed world, while remaining prevalent everywhere else.

Dr Marshall hopes to see the insidious corkscrew organism controlled to the point where it can no longer pose a threat to the life and health of men, women and children anywhere in the world. His discoveries have already freed millions from unnecessary suffering.

ASM Teachers Travel Award

Elwyn Oldfield



I have enjoyed teaching microbiology for over 30 years at the University of Queensland (UQ). My teaching has been mostly in practical classes, where I have coordinated and tutored classes for medical, dental, science, physiotherapy, human movement and chemical engineering students and I have also conducted lectures in medical, science, physiotherapy, human movement and nursing courses.

In a broader capacity I have been a PBL facilitator for the first 12 years of the graduate medical course at UQ and currently am one of the coordinators of the PASS program (Peer Assisted Study Sessions), which is greatly appreciated by the students in the big first year science courses at UQ.

An ASM initiative at the annual conference in Canberra in 2005 was the introduction of a microbiology workshop for high school science teachers.

In 2006 I redesigned the workshop and, along with Cheryl Power (ASM Ed SIG Chair), conducted it at the conference on the Gold Coast. The enthusiasm of the teachers and the support from the Science Teachers’ Association of Queensland have inspired me to continue to run the workshop annually at UQ since 2006. We have plans for the future to develop it into a more comprehensive resource for high school science teachers, particularly in remote areas.

My career as a university teacher has been very rewarding and I applaud the ASM for making such awards available, as it gives recognition to teaching as a valuable university function. I also hope that the opportunity to talk about the teachers’ workshop might inspire all of us to reach out to schools, to inspire high school students to go on and study microbiology at the university level, to provide the researchers necessary in the pursuit of solutions to many of the world’s problems.

Microbiology in Korea

Prof Mark Walker from the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Wollongong made a recent visit to study some aspects of microbiology in Korea. Here is an extract from his report.

I was invited to present my work on development of a vaccine against group A streptococcal vaccine at a joint symposium at the *International Vaccine Institute* (IVI) and the BioMax Institute at *Seoul National University* (SNU). Most of the speakers were either Korean or Japanese and are working on bacterial gastrointestinal vaccines. The talks were vaccine focussed, and concentrated on enteric disease and viral disease, particularly influenza. At the symposium I was particularly impressed by the genomics work undertaken by Dr. Chun (SNU) as part of the epidemiological analysis of cholera strains and the malaria vaccine work of Prof. Hori (Osaka University). Additionally, the use of sublingual immunisation conducted by Dr. Stadler (IVI) looks to have the benefits of intranasal immunisation without risk associated with translocation of antigen into the CNS. The IVI is very translationally focussed, with approx. 70% of effort focussed on human clinical trials and field trials. GMP is undertaken on site. We inspected the new 300 m² BSL3 clinical and animal facilities that have been recently constructed at IVI, in preparation for a major push into the area of tuberculosis vaccine booster research (post BCG primary vaccination). The Director of the IVI (John Clements) and the Director of the IVI scientific division (Cecil Czerkinsky) are both enthusiastic about the future of IVI, and the institute has rapidly grown in the last few years with a US\$20+ million per annum budget which is steadily increasing. Discussions with the Director of the BioMax Institute (Myung-Chul Lee) reveal that the Korean government is making a huge investment in the Bio/IT area in an area adjacent

to Incheon airport. Prof. Chun is leading this effort. This project, designated the Bit Port project, is due to begin construction in 2010 and for completion in 2013/4. Approx. 15-20 state of the art research buildings are planned, with the entire project to be part of SNU. Funding is 50:50 government and commercial. I suspect that at least part of the logic behind this expansion is to ensure SNU improves its place in World University rankings.

The 50th anniversary conference of the *Microbiology Society of Korea* (MSK) was opened with a keynote address by Prof. Bonnie Bassler (Princeton; President Elect of the American Society for Microbiology) who described efforts to manipulate quorum sensing to develop new therapeutics against bacterial infections. The MSK conference seminars and posters were very strong in areas such as environmental microbiology, bioprocessing, fungi and agricultural microbiology. Microbiology in Korea is split between the MSK and another medical microbiology society which is focussed on clinical infectious disease. That said, there were still some excellent presentations and posters in viral and bacterial pathogenesis. About 80% of presentations were in English. During the conference, I was afforded the opportunity to give a vote of congratulations on behalf of the Australian Society of Microbiology and the Australian Academy of Science on the occasion of the MSK 50th anniversary. The conference was held in a very friendly and relaxed atmosphere, and I made new friends and colleagues on my stay in Korea.

I thank the ASM and the Australian Academy of Science for the opportunity to visit South Korea and attend the 50th anniversary conference of the MSK.



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ASM Distinguished Service Awards 2009



Dr Ailsa Hocking

Ailsa Hocking has led a distinguished career at CSIRO; however, it is her distinguished service to ASM that we wish to recognise at this time. This service has mainly been on two fronts, in two quite separate eras.

She was very active in the NSW branch through the mid-1970s and the 1980s,

among other things, as NSW branch secretary and editing the NSW branch newsletter. She was on the organising committee (as secretary) for the 1978 and 1984 conferences in Sydney – back in the days when ASM members organised everything, including accommodation and registration! The organisers even bottled their own wine for the 1984 meeting, which she thoroughly enjoyed!

She also chaired the Culture Collection SIG in the 1980s to the 1990s.

At the national level, she has been on the ASM editorial board since the journal was revamped as *Microbiology Australia* in 1995, under the chairmanship of Dick Groot-Obbink. Of the original editorial board, only Peter Coloe and Ailsa remain. When Dick retired as chairman in 1999, Ailsa took over.

Dr Patrick Blackall

Pat has made an outstanding contribution to the ASM both at the national and at the QLD branch level.

At the QLD branch level he has served almost continuously on the branch committee in the positions of chairman, treasurer



and secretary, the position he currently holds and has done for at least the past 15 years. He has given generously of his time in the running of branch activities, such as convening symposia, coordination of the visiting speakers program, organisation of social events and so on.

At the national level, he has given outstanding service as treasurer of ASM annual scientific meetings held in Brisbane, Cairns and the Gold Coast and been a member of local and national organising committees. Pat also serves on the Veterinary Microbiology Special Interest Group committee as chairman.

Pat is admired and recognised by all for his helpfulness and cheerfulness in the exercise of his service. He is a truly corporate citizen who personally sacrifices his time for the benefit of the ASM, its members and the profession.



Dr Tony Della-Porta

Tony Della-Porta has contributed to ASM in many areas over his long career. In the early years, he was active at branch level, serving as Victorian representative on Council from 1975 to 1977.

He was appointed to the Biosafety Committee in 1992 and served as its chairman from 1992 to 1998. He

provided invaluable input and advice to Council on biosafety matters.

He was an inaugural member of the editorial board on *Microbiology Australia*, formed in 1995 under the chairmanship of Dr Dick Groot-Obbink to revitalise the society's journal, giving it a new look and higher profile.

Tony retired from the editorial board in the middle of 2008, having been a very active contributor, guest-editing six issues (the greatest number for any individual board member) on Wildlife Diseases (with John Mackenzie, May 1996), Aquaculture (May 1997), Importation of agricultural diseases (July 2001), Bioterrorism – Australia's response (May 2003), Advances in Diagnostic Techniques/Point of Care testing (May 2006) and Biomangement and Risk Assessment (May 2008).

Tony has always provided very active input and many suggestions for topics and authors over the years he served on the board. ASM has certainly benefitted from Tony's enthusiasm and dedication to MA over the 13 years he served as a member of the editorial board.

Mr Lee Smythe



Lee Smythe, chairman of the Society's Standing Committee on Biosafety and Biosecurity, is stepping down from this position after almost 10 years of service. Lee's contribution to the ASM, and to microbiology more broadly, has been outstanding. We look forward to Lee's continued involvement as a member of the Committee.

The ASM is often called upon to provide advice and where this is related to biosafety or biosecurity – now sometimes referred to as biorisk – these requests are referred to Lee.

Through Lee's leadership, the Standing Committee has provided advice to government agencies (like the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and AQIS), advice to universities and other research organisations on risk assessment and management for biological agents and some investigations of biosafety incidents to determine whether the practices in place were appropriate and what improvements might be required.

Lee has also been an ASM representative on the Standards Committee that is responsible for producing and revising Australia and New Zealand Standards, Safety in Laboratories Part 3: Microbiological aspects and containment facilities (AS/NZS 2243.3). Lee's contribution here has helped to ensure that this Standard remains relevant to microbiologists – an important and not always easy task.

Assoc Prof Keryn Christiansen

Keryn Christiansen has contributed to the ASM in many areas over her long career. She has served on the ASM Executive and Council for the last four years, including a recently completed two-year term as president. Her term as president coincided with a period of substantial change for the Society and she drove a major restructure of the national office. These changes will see improved services to members and will allow the Society to more proactively interact with external stakeholders.



In 2001 Keryn was the chairperson of the LOC for the Society's annual meeting in Perth. Notwithstanding the onerous tasks associated with a 'normal' meeting, the 2001 meeting was presented with unprecedented challenges, including the collapse of one of the two domestic airlines in the month prior to the meeting and the acts of international terrorism associated with September 11, just two weeks before. Despite this the meeting was a national success.

Keryn has acted for and represented the Society in many other ways. These include acting as ASM representative on the Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA) and, in the past, served as both the secretary and president of the International Society for Infectious Diseases. She has also been a member of the World Health Organization Working Party to develop the Framework for the WHO Global Strategy for the Containment of Antimicrobial Resistance.



Robyn Wood

Robyn's major contributions came primarily in her 10-year role as ASM Serology SIG convener. During this period she and her colleagues managed to mould a very active SIG. Most notably she approached the director of the National Reference Laboratory, Dr Elizabeth Dax. With Dr Dax she coordinated

the incorporation of diagnostic serology into a meeting which was primarily restricted to blood bank issues. This has proved to be a highly valuable forum for both new and senior serologists and molecular diagnostic scientists as it deals with bench-top issues as well as highlighting future directions. This merger of interests has also ensured that Quality Assurance has a larger role to play in the annual meetings of both the ASM and NRL.

As convener, Robyn guaranteed that the SIG also challenged government decisions relating to the regulation of *in vitro* diagnostic medical devices (IVDs). It was her role in this that brought her to the attention of the TGA. She was subsequently offered a position with the TGA to assist in rolling out the new IVD regulatory framework four years ago. This has resulted in a somewhat lengthy process, but will come to fruition during 2009.

Robyn has fulfilled an active role on ASM NSAC from its inception as well as serving as chair of ASM Division 1 in 2005. She has also been involved in a number of NPAAC standards.

ASM national scientific meeting Perth, July 6–10, 2009

The Perth 2009 meeting provided a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the Golden Jubilee year of the Australian Society for Microbiology. The new Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre, nestled between the beautiful Swan River and the city centre, provided an ideal location for the meeting. Attended by nearly 700 delegates, the meeting was a great success, combining a world-class scientific program in an atmosphere of relaxed celebration of the 50th birthday of our Society.

The theme of *Reflection and Direction* was chosen by the LOC to encourage delegates to reflect on the ASM's achievements and, importantly, the individuals involved, on this significant milestone in the Society's history. Alongside that reflection, the scientific committee provided the direction with a program that rivalled that of any meeting in the world.

The meeting unofficially 'started' on the Sunday evening, with the Public Forum, *Apocalypse When* at the Octagon theatre in the beautiful grounds of the University of Western Australia



Gail Dixon (WA) getting into the party spirit at the Rubbo evening.



Prof John Mackenzie (past-president ASM) after Dr Mike Alpers had just delivered the 'stand-in' Bazeley Oration. John presented Mike with a Perth 2009 T shirt, copy of *Pasteur's Gambit* and a 50th Golden Jubilee medallion.

(UWA). Dr Norman Swan (ABC Radio National) facilitated a panel discussion on infectious disease risks we may face in the future. The panel, Prof Barry Marshall, Prof Rita Colwell, Prof John Mackenzie, Dr Peter Collignon and Assoc Prof Keryn Christiansen, were taken through a number of possible scenarios of infectious disease threats, including SARS, pandemic influenza, impacts of climate change, antimicrobial resistance and water recycling in a highly informative and entertaining evening. Thanks must go to Prof Alan Robson, Vice-Chancellor UWA for his support of the evening.

Antimicrobial, mycology and teaching workshops were held (off-site) on the Monday, which were very well attended with thanks to the convenors Tom Riley, Ian Arthur and Chris Burke respectively. The meeting officially got under way at the opening ceremony



2009 Becton Dickinson prize-winners. L-R: Jeremy Barr (QLD), Jamie Summerfield (WA), Michael Taylor (SA), Cheryl Power (session chair), Dr David Durack (BD–USA), Richard Bradbury (Tas.), Kheng Hui Tan (Vic.) and Xiao Yang (NSW).



The stage is set for the dinner and party following the Rubbo Oration.

on the Monday evening. Following the welcome comments by LOC Chair Rod Bowman, the ASM National President, Prof Hatch Stokes presented ASM members with a range of annual achievement and service awards. This included awards to overseas students from the United States (Stephanie Bell, Millis–Colwell Postgraduate Travel Grant) and United Kingdom (Richard Harvey, Hayes–Burnet Postgraduate Travel Award) for



National president, Hatch Stokes, presenting Rubbo Orator Bonnie Bassler with a copy of *Pasteur's Gambit* and a 50th Golden Jubilee medallion.



Guests enjoying the Rubbo dinner. L-R Tom Riley (Div 1 chair), Lance Peterson (USA), Estee Madaschi (chair Social Sub-Committee), Ellen Jo Baron and partner Jim (USA) and Rita Colwell (USA).

jointly hosted prizes sponsored by ASM with our overseas sister organisations. Following that, Nobel Laureate, Prof Barry Marshall presented our first keynote address, *Helicobacter pylori – Past Lessons and Future Prospects* to highlight the meeting theme.

Immediately following the opening plenary, the festivities began, with Hatch Stokes proposing a toast to ASM's 50th birthday and Rod Bowman cutting the birthday cake. This preceded Rod and Barry Marshall leading a rousing chorus of *Happy Birthday* and three cheers. The evening's festivities were rounded off with cocktails and canapés in the Exhibition Hall.



Hatch Stokes working up a sweat on the dance floor.

Tuesday morning saw the launch of the scientific program per se with opening plenary presentations by Assoc Prof Liz Harry (Fenner lecture) and the first of our international visitors, Ellen Jo Baron (USA). The format of the scientific program was similar for each day, inasmuch as the morning opened with a plenary session, followed by morning tea and then symposium sessions. Further symposium sessions, poster sessions and proffered paper sessions were held after lunch, complemented by a further stand-alone plenary where Dr Thomas Ksiazek presented the Snowdon Lecture on a *One Biology Approach to Pathogen Discovery* and short presentations by the BD award winners. All plenary sessions were stand-alone, with a mixture of divisional speakers to facilitate cross-fertilisation of ideas across the various divisions of the Society. The feedback certainly indicated that this format was widely supported. Trade cocktails saw the completion of the evening.



David and Llewellyn and Dickeson enjoy the Rubbo evening on the night of their 26th wedding anniversary.



Crowd getting involved on the dance floor (Rubbo evening).

Wednesday saw a complete day of the scientific program of symposia, proffered papers, posters and plenary presentations by Prof Bob Hancock, Dr Susan Gottesman and Prof Diane Griffin. The evening was left open for delegates to have some free time.

Thursday was probably the highlight of the week, starting with plenary presentations by Prof Ian Lipkin and Dr David Stephens. Nobel laureate, Prof Harald zur Hausen was scheduled to present the Bazeley Oration but had to withdraw at the last moment due to medical reasons. In place of this, Dr Mike Alpers stepped in and presented his work on the delineation of the cause of kuru, the talk finishing with a short video of the impact of the disease on the indigenous Papua New Guinea people. Great thanks must go to Mike for presenting such an interesting and moving talk given at such short notice.



Our past-presidents John Mackenzie (L) and Dick Groot Obbink (R) with Rita Colwell, past-president of the other (USA) ASM following awards at the Past Presidents plenary.

The highlight of the week was to follow that same night with the Jubilee Rubbo Evening. Attended by over 400 people, Prof Bonnie Bassler presented her talk, *Tiny Conspiracies*, a presentation describing quorum sensing, the language of bacteria. The stunning talk was followed by a dinner-dance combining the previously separate Rubbo supper and conference dinner functions. The combined function gave all delegates the opportunity to attend the dinner as part of the registration cost of the meeting when previously an additional charge was made. Virtually all the delegates who listened to Bonnie's talk stayed on for a very enjoyable buffet dinner. Following dinner, live music



Hatch Stokes receiving a commemorative plaque from Rita Colwell (USA-ASM).

was provided by Daren Reid and the Soul City Groove, which quickly prompted many to let their hair down on the dance floor (photos below and right). The evening wound up just before midnight, but the new format of combining the Rubbo evening with the traditional formal dinner proved a huge success.

The final day opened with a plenary session at 8.30, which tested the resolve of delegates who 'kicked on' at the previous night's dinner. The final scientific session of the meeting, *Past President's Plenary* saw Prof John Mackenzie AO describe the

role of the Global Outbreak Alert Response Network (GOARN) in emerging diseases and Prof Rita Colwell (past-president of the 'other' ASM) deliver her talk on climate and its impact on human health and infectious disease. The closing presentations were a fitting finale to *Perth 2009 – Reflection and Direction*.

The formalities of the meeting were completed with the flag handed to Dee Carter (Sydney 2010 chair) by Rod Bowman. Dee closed the meeting with a snippet of what to expect in Sydney next year extending an invitation to all to attend.

In closing, the Australian Society for Microbiology would like to extend a warm thank you to the UK and US microbiology societies who played a key role in helping the ASM celebrate its special year. I think everyone who attended the meeting enjoyed the week of science and celebration.



ASM's 50th birthday cake.



Stephanie Bell (centre) winner of the Millis–Colwell Postgraduate Travel Award with (L-R) Hatch Stokes (ASM president), Rita Colwell past-president USA-ASM, Nancy Millis (past-president ASM) and Rod Bowman (LOC chair).



Rod Bowman (LOC chair) presenting Barry Marshall with honorary fellowship of ASM, copy of *Pasteur's Gambit* and a 50th Golden Jubilee medallion



Barry Marshall delivering plenary at opening ceremony.

ASM *SUSTAINING MEMBERS*

Abbott Diagnostics Division	BD Diagnostics	Olympus
BioMerieux Australia Pty Ltd	Don Whitley Scientific Pty Ltd	Department of Primary Industries
Wyeth Australia Pty Ltd	Inverness Medical Innovations	Roche Diagnostic
Oxoid Australia Pty Ltd	Siemens Health Care Diagnostics	Diagnostic Solutions
Bio Rad Laboratories	Blackaby Diagnostics Pty Ltd	Diagnostic Technology

ASM *NEW MEMBERS*

ACT	Sarah Osvath	Sharon Goh	Aldona Rolka
Joy Thompson	Simon Cook	Sharon McDougall	Bianca Vassallo
NSW	Stacey Dowman	Sharona Willetts	David Allen
Alyson Christel Bryant	Tallulah Brown	Tara Vollmerhausen	Dorit Becher
Andrew Dombrowski	Tejaswi Shetty	Tech Wah Chia	Joanne Wee
Angus Blazey	Thein Zaw Oo	Vu Tuan Nguyen	Julie Harman
Anna Henningham	Wade Foster	SA	Maryza Graham
Ariane Acuna	QLD	Abiodun David Ogunniyi	Nadim Naser
Carla Giles	Anna Voss	Bart Eijkelkamp	Nadine McDonald
Catherine James	Christina Neuman	Craig Duncis	Puthayalai Treerat
Christine Handaja	Courtney Reece	Craig Wilsdon	Stewart Short
Dharminidevi Ranjit Kumar	Daniel Wurlpel	Jacty Chew	Terry Kwok-Schuelein
Duyen MyNguyen	Dk.Seti Pg.Othman	Janie Mavromatis	Ya-Hsun Lin
Hannah Glover	Elaine Nielsen	Mabel Lum	WA
Heidi Williams	Emma Anastasi	Michael Papadimitrious	Allison Imrie
Javad Barouei	Frances Slater	Michelle Chen	David Keast
Kelly Anne Nunes	Ines Ibranovic	Ramya Thangarajan	Dino Bee Aik Tan
Khaled Alnassafi	Irda Safni	Rethish Raghunadhanan	Duncan McLellan
Lisa Seymour	James Marsh	Sean McDonald	Joshua Linn
Mahta Moussavi	Jayde Gawthorne	Shih-Hsun Chen	Lynne Wilson
Marie Claire Liu	Khang Duong	Syatirah Abdullah	Nadishani Kathaluwa
Michael Liu	Makrina Totsika	Sylvia Baltzer	Liyanage
Parimala Madi	Marjoree Sehu	Tanvi Makadia	Premarani Thingom
Paul Baker	Meagan Clarkson	TAS	Ruth Thornton
Pauline Moloney	Melissa Payne	Elizabeth Witherden	Wan Hon Koh
Peter Maamary	Naree Goodby	Vaughn Walsh	INDIA
Peter Whitehurst	Nathan Chen	VIC	Sanjay Harish Doiphode
Rachel Botting	Robert Joyce	Abdul-Hadi Abd	
Raed Simhairi	Sally Appleton		
Rebecca Turnbull	Sarina Gloeckl		

Science meets Parliament

March 17-18, Canberra 2009



Andrew Holmes

*School of Molecular and Microbial
Biosciences
University of Sydney*



Carol Ginns

ASM National Office, Melbourne

The Federation of Australian Science and Technology Societies (FASTS) has run an event known as 'Science meets Parliament' on an annual basis for just over 10 years. SmP is not a lobbying event, but rather is broadly aimed at fostering interactions between scientists and parliamentarians. This goal is addressed in two parts that could be loosely described as scientists learning about politics and then politicians learning about science. This year ASM member Andrew Holmes attended SmP as did Carol Ginns, executive officer of the ASM.

The first day of SmP involved a series of presentations to the scientists describing the life of politicians and the political process. The take-home message was that whilst scientists tend to see politicians as providers of funding and to a lesser extent setters of priorities, politicians are in reality primarily users of science. Politicians (and their staff) are interested in how they can use science to:

- (1) get media attention
- (2) *develop policy* that will get media attention
- (3) *support their attacks on poor policy* and thus gain media attention.

This is not as cynical as it may sound, but simply a reality of an environment where the media cycle drives the day. Just as 'work not published is work not done', so we might also say 'policy not publicised is policy not made'. Politicians do use science and use it sensibly, but they need it to be provided in a format that is publicly accessible and media-friendly. The day was capped off by an inspiring after-dinner speech from our chief scientist, Penny Sackett, regarding the role of scientists in response to climate change. The dinner was attended by over 50 politicians and it was encouraging to see that they clearly appreciated her words as much as did the 100 or so scientists.

Day two consisted of meetings between parliamentarians and small groups of scientists. Time is at a premium for all parliamentarians and their staffers when parliament is sitting and, if a division (vote) is called, the bells are rung throughout Parliament House, summoning Members or Senators to the chamber. As a result, the organisation of the meetings is a rather military operation, with a control centre whiteboard that is constantly updated with changed meeting times or cancellations. Despite this, Andrew's meeting with a West Australian MP with a strong science background (his family includes several PhDs – one in microbiology!) went for 90 minutes. During the meeting, which included three other scientists, the MP was very interested to hear from each person about their work and in return provided a lot of insight into how difficult it is to use science in policy-making. A meeting with a South Australian Senator attended by Carol and two other scientists highlighted the breadth of information politicians must assimilate and communicate.

It is clear that a non-scientist needs clear information to communicate science effectively to other non-scientists. In Australia scientists do not engage politicians effectively. The MP Andrew met with had chaired parliamentary committees on issues that revolve around science, yet industry lobby groups contact him almost daily and scientific societies very rarely.

So what did we learn? SmP is a valuable exercise and the ASM participation in it has, and will continue to, help raise the profile of our Society. Politicians are very willing to hear from scientists, indeed perhaps more so than from other professional groups and most will be pleased to accommodate you if you initiate the contact. The way in which scientists interact with politicians is not always effective. Scientists who complain about funding levels without offering politicians 'media-friendly science news or policy ideas' are viewed as asking to get something for nothing.

Finding the courage to lead



Dennis Mok

LLMSIG
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Tyrone Pitsis

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Organisation Studie
Faculty of Business
University of Technology,
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Email tyrone.pitsis@uts.edu.au

Courage is not simply one of the virtues but the form of every virtue at the testing point.

Clive Staples Lewis

Courage is doing what you are afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you are scared.

**Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, World War I Ace,
United States Air Corps**

Introduction

Trooper Mark Donaldson became the 97th Australian and the first Special Air Service Regiment soldier to receive the Victoria Cross on 16 January 2009. The citation begins with:

For most conspicuous acts of gallantry in action in a circumstance of great peril in Afghanistan ... Trooper Donaldson's actions on this day displayed exceptional courage in circumstances of great peril¹.

Trooper Donaldson's own volition and his display of complete disregard for his own safety ultimately saved the life of a coalition force interpreter and ensured the safety of the other coalition members on 2 September 2008. This is an example of a conspicuous act of gallantry, requiring a special form of leadership – supreme courage, a disregard for danger and complete devotion to duty².

Etymology

The root of the word courage is cour, the Old French word for 'heart and spirit'. Commonly courage, also known as bravery, will and fortitude, is the ability to confront uncertainty, danger or the unknown³. Courage consists of two components: moral courage – the ability to act in the face of popular opposition, shame, scandal or discouragement; and physical courage – bravery in the face of personal harm, hardship or threat of death⁴.

Can everybody be courageous?

Courage is something that 'becomes' so through its act. It requires one to act in the face of great uncertainty and potential loss. More importantly, courage is a signature strength that can lie dormant awaiting for the appropriate context and conditions. It is safe to say that every person has been or will be courageous at some stage in their lives. The degree of courageousness is both subjective and collective. Subjective in that each of us knows how far outside our own comfort zone we are operating; collective in that the courageous act is valued by society. As such the reality is that all of us have the potential to be courageous, but leaders tend to display courage beyond one's own self-interest⁵. Examples include Nelson Mandela, Gandhi, Simpson and others. The challenge for leadership is to channel people's potential courageousness towards organisational objectives. However, to do so, their needs to be a strong alignment between individual and organisational values. Values are those things that people believe are important and which drive their behaviours. Organisations, therefore, need to ensure they address individual values in order to align both individual and organisational behaviours⁶.

According to Aristotle, a student of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great, courage is an essential component of virtue. It is a point between the excess of rashness and the deficiency of cowardice. Courage is more than a common skill; it is an essential skill that all leaders must have. All leaders must have courage, namely physical courage at some levels, but moral courage at every level^{3,7,8}. So courage is the cornerstone of leadership⁹.

Application of courageous leadership

Courageous leaders tend to take full responsibility for their decisions and actions, even when events do not go according to their plans, especially while facing unexpected crises, poor ethics, incompetent management and hypercompetition¹⁰. At most laboratories, courageous leaders assist us to steer clear of bias, prejudice, or malice, even when it is uncomfortable or it may seem easier to keep quiet. There are many opportunities for courageous leadership to be practised at work on a daily basis. Unfortunately, most people believe that courageous leadership is only crucial at senior management level. However, as we illustrated above, courage is relevant to all junior and senior leaders within an organisation. Some applications that leaders may consider include:

Overcoming the fear of change – most projects require significant changes in order to realign the business to its new business objectives. This often causes fear and resistance among staff. The courageous leader becomes a change agent by working with these change resisters. The change agent focuses on staff relationships and collaboration in specific organisational areas targeted for transformation.

Inspire work teams – most routine tasks are becoming team-oriented. Often leaders with courage are required to use facilitation skills competently to keep the team viable and productive. With increasing culture diversity at current workplaces, extra attention is required for management to guide teams through standard developmental stages effectively.

Confronting groupthink – the courageous leader challenges groupthink. Groupthink refers to a work group's tendency to seek harmony and avoid conflict: as such they will downplay and even discourage dissent and differences of opinion. Research shows that such behaviour can be devastating. The courageous leader is not narcissistic and will listen and promote the voice of those he or she leads¹¹.

Becoming more courageous at work

The ever-increasingly complex environment places challenging demands on contemporary leaders. It is important to remain alert and up-to-date with courageous leadership preparation.

Be the best you can be – a jack of all trades is master of none. Strive to do everything in your life with the greatest of competency and dedication possible. To do so requires you to not overcommit yourself to the point where you can no longer act with integrity and competency. A courageous leader knows when to say 'no' and more importantly knows how to say it. Be the best you can be; be true to yourself and to your values and beliefs.

Identify and affirm your strengths and eliminate your weaknesses – knowing both your strengths and weaknesses is critical. Do more of the things you like doing and do fewer of those things you do not. But if the things you avoid are those things you are scared of, then you are essentially dealing with an issue of courage. Think of a time in your life where you have overcome obstacles or challenges. What did you do? How did you do it and how did you think and feel? Relive and reapply those experiences in any future challenges and do not be afraid of anything that comes your way. You will find that you are more resilient than you might think.

Concluding challenge

Courage can result in teamwork, excellence and sustained profits. Courage is hidden within the heart of us and is closely linked with communication and teamwork. We would like to ask the reader to ask yourself the following questions: Is there a long-term benefit for me to pursue this? How long would it take to become work-ready? What are the real nonpolitical obstacles? Can these be either removed, reduced or worked with? Can we start spearheading the agenda by creating a launch point for a courageous move later? Do we have the technical capability, relevant leadership skills and credibility to make this happen? Nevertheless, despite how courageous you are at work, it is important to note that most management will still make the same application and decision errors. We truly hope that this article will stimulate and generate some improvement points for all of us to start working on.

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NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE DIVISIONAL CHAIRS 2012 CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Expressions of interest are requested for the following positions on the National Scientific Advisory Committee (NSAC).

Division 1 Chair (2012) Medical and Veterinary Microbiology

Division 2 Chair (2012) Virology

Division 3 Chair (2012) General, Applied and Environmental Microbiology

Division 4 Chair (2012) Microbial Genetics, Physiology and Pathogenesis

The successful appointees will have the opportunity to serve a three-year term of office, concluding at the end of the 2012 Annual Scientific Meeting, which will be held in Brisbane.

The primary responsibilities of the Division Chairs will be:

- to organise the symposium component of the 2012 Annual Scientific Meeting
- to provide input and advice to the organisers of the 2013 Annual Scientific Meeting
- to provide scientific advice to the society as a member of NSAC

It is envisaged that the divisional representatives will be researchers and scientists with enthusiasm, good organisational and communication skills and broad knowledge and an excellent or developing reputation in the divisional field.

Fellows, members, senior associate or associate members interested in serving in these exciting and challenging new honorary positions should submit a brief *curriculum vitae* (no more than two pages), together with an appropriate covering letter to, Associate Professor Liz Harry, (Vice-President, Scientific Affairs) by email to the National Office michelle@theasm.com.au by 21 December 2009.

2009-2010 meetings

Contributions listing relevant meetings are welcome. Please send to: editor@theasm.com.au

2009 – Golden Jubilee Year

12-15 September
San Francisco, CA

Interscience Conference on Antimicrobials and Chemotherapy
www.icaac.org

17-18 September
Dublin, Ireland

Control and Management of Pathogenic Escherichia coli
<http://www.pen-europe.eu/asp/>

29-31 October
Hamilton Island QLD

Mycology Masterclass IV
[1 November 2009 – Additional Masterclass Workshop for laboratory staff]

Convenor: Associate Professor David Ellis
Conference Management: Australian Society for Microbiology
Contact: Janette Sofronidis, Conference Manager

13-17 December
Lorne, Victoria

5th Australian Virology Group Meeting

Invited International Speaker – Prof. Ann Arvin
Symposia themes: • New, emerging and re-emerging viruses • Virus structure, receptors and assembly • Virus-host interactions • Gene expression and replication • Viral vectors and gene therapy • Viral epidemiology and diagnostics • Viral disease • Biosecurity • Evasion of host defences • Viral control strategies – Vaccines and Therapeutics
www.avg.org.au

2010

21-24 February

Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel
8th ASM Biodefense and Emerging Diseases Research Meeting
www.asmbiodefense.org

24-26 February
Beijing, China

BIT Life Sciences' 2nd Annual World Vaccine Congress - 2010
<http://www.bitlifesciences.com/wcv2010/Information.asp>

25-27 February
Sofitel Sydney Wentworth Hotel, Sydney
Antimicrobials 2010

11th Annual Scientific Meeting, Australian Society for Antimicrobials
www.antimicrobials2010@icms.com.au

29 March - 1 April
Edinburgh International Conference Centre, UK
Society for General Microbiology, Spring 2010 Meeting: ,
Main theme: Systems microbiology
www.sgm.ac.uk/meetings/MTGPAGES/Eicc2010.cfm

10-13 April
Vienna, Austria

20th European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Disease
<http://www.congex.ch/ECCMID2010/>

19-22 April
Hilton Clearwater Beach, Clearwater, FL

32nd Symposium on Biotechnology for Fuels and Chemicals (Society for Industrial Microbiology)
<http://www.simhq.org/meetings/meetings.aspx>

23-27 May
San Diego Convention Center, CA

110th General Meeting of the American Society for Microbiology
<http://gm.asm.org>

28 June – 1 July
Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, Melbourne VIC

11th International Symposium on the Genetics of Industrial Microorganisms
Chair: Ian Macreadie
www.gim2010.org

4-8 July
Darling Harbour Convention Centre, Sydney NSW
ASM 2010 Sydney

1-5 August
Hyatt Regency Embarcadero San Francisco

SIM 60th Annual Meeting and Exhibition (Society for Industrial Microbiology)
<http://www.simhq.org/meetings/meetings.aspx>

1-6 August
Edinburgh, UK

The 9th International Mycological Congress (IMC9); The Biology of Fungi
www.imc9.info

6-9 September
University of Nottingham, UK

Society for General Microbiology, Autumn 2010 Meeting
<http://www.sgm.ac.uk/meetings/MTGPAGES/Nottingham2010.cfm>

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