Report from ASM 2013: A Tour of Microbes

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Adelaide 2013 LOC Chair

This year the annual scientific meeting for the Australian Society for Microbiology was held at the Adelaide Convention Centre during 7–10 July. It attracted approximately 600 delegates from many parts of the world. They were treated to fine winter days, a warm welcome and a diverse scientific program.

As a society we are constantly trying to improve our meetings for delegates and this year was no exception. We continued the shortened format, initiated by Brisbane in 2012, and once again included a meeting APP in an attempt to improve communication and reduce the need for hard copies of the abstract book. Most plenary sessions were also audio recorded and linked to the slides for viewing as you listen. These should be available on the website in due course, along with as many of the posters as possible in PDF format. More significantly and for the first time, we trialled merging symposia with relevant proffered paper presentations in the one session, which by all accounts worked well and was well received.

On Sunday the meeting started with five workshops: Cosmetics and Pharmaceuticals; Culture Media; FASM Applications; BioCyc; and of course the ever popular Antibiotics workshop, which was filled to capacity. A public lecture was held mid-afternoon, which was presented by Forrest Rowher, who spoke on the interactions of macroorganisms, like corals and humans, with their viral and microbial communities. It was a fascinating and entertaining presentation from one of our key plenary speakers who was a real character. After a short break the meeting proper began with the awards ceremony followed by the Bazeley Oration presented by Raman Rao from the Sanofi Pasteur Institute, on the progress of their Dengue Vaccine program. The Fenner Lecture was then given by the recipient of the Frank Fenner Award, Gilda Tachedjian, who spoke on HIV prevention strategies for women. As usual the ever popular welcome mixer was held in the trade hall together with the first of two poster sessions.

Over the next 3 days delegates were treated to another 12 plenary sessions delivered by internationally renowned speakers such as Patrick Murray, Ron Atlas and Juan Lubroth, just to name a few, who delivered the Snowdon Lecture. The Rubbo Oration on Monday night was delivered by Roy Curtis III in a more relaxed format over
dinner followed by a dance to the tunes of the Baker Boys Band who played late into the evening. By all accounts the night was a great success and enjoyed by all who attended. On Wednesday we were joined by the Australasian Mycological Society who held a further 2 days of seminars on Thursday and Friday. Both our societies and delegates alike will always benefit from this type of collaboration and we look forward to joining with them at future national meetings.

A renewed focus on students was undertaken this year by holding, not only the student poster awards but also a networking breakfast so that students were given the opportunity to meet and talk to several of the plenary speakers and local experts in a casual and relaxed forum. It was well attended for a 7.30 am start and finished all too soon, but overall was a great success. A student social night was also held on Tuesday night at a local hotel, with pizza and subsidised drinks on the menu. This was also a huge success and, I believe, carried on into the wee hours of the evening. I must acknowledge the LOC student representative, Carla Giles, for a magnificent effort in organising these very successful activities.

Of course no meeting would be complete without the support of our trade participants and sponsors, especially those who attend the meeting year after year. In particular I thank the Adelaide Convention Bureau and Thermo Fisher Scientific as our major sponsors for the meeting.

Finally I thank everyone who attended the meeting and hope you are as inspired and motivated as I am after a meeting containing presentations of the quality and depth that we were privy to. I also thank everyone involved in the organisation of the meeting – The National Executive, the National Scientific Advisory Committee, Divisional Chairs, Special Interest Groups, Local Organising Committee and last but certainly not least ASN Events who did a fantastic job in their first year as conference organisers for the society.

The society’s flag has now been handed on to Melbourne for next year’s meeting and planning is well under way. I hope to see many of you there.

Awardees

Peter Timms: ASM Distinguished Service Award.

Helen Cain: ASM Teachers Travel Award.

Iain Gosbell: bioMérieux ASM Identifying Resistance Award.

Sylvia Kirov: ASM Distinguished Service Award.

Noelene Wilson: FASM.

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BD ASM Student Travel Awardees
Victoria: Snehal Jadhav, Swinburne University
Tasmania: Shi Feng, University of Tasmania
New South Wales: Laura Nolan, University of Technology, Sydney
Queensland: James Marsh, Queensland University of Technology
South Australia: Flinders University

Patrick Murray with Laura Nolan, James Marsh, Snehal Jadhav, Renee Smith and Shi Feng.

ASM Adelaide Student Poster Prize
Angie Jarrad, University of Queensland
Motahareh Nobakht, University of the Sunshine Coast
Zoe Anne Dyson, La Trobe University
Carla Giles, University of South Australia
Victoria Lewis, University of Adelaide

Zoe Anne Dyson, Carla Giles, Paul Young, Motahareh Nobakht and Angie Jarrad.