

Short Report

GENETICS OF LABORATORY RODENTS

INSTITUT PASTEUR DE MONTEVIDEO
URUGUAY
Nov 24 to Dec 5th 2008

1. General Summary

This course was held in Montevideo (Uruguay) from November 24 to December 5. Due to both the number and high-level quality of the professors, and to the fact that all participants were carefully selected among a long list of candidates, the Conference had a high international standard. It was a very successful event, both from the scientific and social points of view, allowing more than 30 researchers from different countries to spend together two weeks for science discussion. Furthermore, all students received credits for their PhD curricula, meaning that this Conference will be considered as a significant element of their PhD programs. The Conference was held in the premises of the Institut Pasteur de Montevideo (IPMon), a novel and very well equipped technological platform directed by Dr. Guillermo Dighiero. More precisely, the local organization of the course was held by Martina Crispo, (head of the Transgenic and Experimental Animal Unit) and her team.

Forty-seven participants from around the world applied to follow the course, and priority was given to 21 regional participants based firstly on the excellence of their CV or of the laboratory where they are conducting their studies, since they don't have many opportunities to access to this kind of practical courses. Participants selected were from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru and Uruguay, mainly PhD students and veterinaries responsible for animal house facilities. In addition, we decided to keep equilibrium between countries and universities in order to avoid as much as possible the participation of more than two students belonging to the same university or institute.

2. Scientific highlights

The scientific program was divided into lectures and practical sessions, with a total of 43 and 44 hours, respectively. The first week of the course was mainly dedicated to formal genetics, extensively covering the fields of origin and diversity of laboratory strains, genetic monitoring, genetic mapping, mammalian genome, microsatellites and others (see the program of the Conference). These lectures were held in English or Spanish to facilitate the exchanges between lecturers and participants.

The second week of the course was targeted on quantitative and functional genetics, with lectures of positional cloning, quantitative trait loci, targeted mutagenesis, transgenesis in mice and rats, sperm and embryo cryopreservation and embryonic stem cells biology and engineering.

Since the theoretical lectures were open to the public, many students and researchers from Uruguay who did not receive fellowships to participate to the course, attended nevertheless the lectures.

In addition, all the participants presented a poster of their scientific work, with the objective to have a deeper knowledge of each other. They had an evaluation of the course and all of them succeeded and obtained rather high marks.

In addition to the Pasteur Institute partners that participated as teachers (Jean Jacques Panthier, Xavier Montagutelli, Jean Louis Guenet, Jean Jaubert, Michel Cohen Tannoudji, Mariela Bollati and Martina Crispo), we invited professors from Europe (Ignacio Anegón), USA (Fernando Benavides) and different South American countries (Marcelo Rubinstein, José Eduardo Krieger and Luiz Augusto Correa Pasos), as specified in the program. We covered their travels and other expenses as food and accommodation. All of them, including several internationally recognized researchers, accepted to generously participate to the Course without asking any honorarium.

3. Organization and reaction of the participants

The organization of the course was carried out by the Transgenic and Experimental Animal Unit of Pasteur Institute of Montevideo, directed by Martina Crispo as local organizer and co-workers Magdalena Cárdenas and Geraldine Schlapp, and the Mouse Functional Genetics Unit of Pasteur Institute of Paris. Co-organizers from Paris were Jean-Jacques Panthier, Xavier Montagutelli, Jean Louis Guenet and Michel Cohen-Tannoudji.

Speakers from France, USA, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay contributed to the high level of the conferences during the course.

Local accommodation of invited speakers, co-organizers and participants was done at <http://www.ermitagemontevideo.com/> all together in order to have good chances of interaction among them.

Moreover, the practical trainings were achieved in time. One poster session was organized with the aim to get deeper into each participant research and try to establish collaborations. Several social dinners and cocktails were also organized to facilitate interactions between the participants and speakers.

The main sponsors of the Course were EMBO and Pasteur Institute of Paris. The International Society for Transgenic Technologies (ISTT) contributed also as sponsor and collaborates with the diffusion of the course. Several companies (Biriden, ASM, Eleco, Alesco, Aucytal, Bionova, Biologística, Labimed and French Embassy), accepted to support the conference, generously providing us with money, reagents for the trainings and material for the courses.

All the participants were really grateful with the scientific level and the excellent organization of the course, as can be seen in the evaluations of the course they made. Many collaborations were established among them along the course, and the co-organizers presented a PhD program in Pasteur Institute for the interested ones.

The students and the teachers agreed in that the lectures were of high level. For many of the participants this was the first opportunity to visit Uruguay, and particularly Montevideo and the old city of Colonia. All the participants agreed in that it was a wonderful experience that open their minds to the existence of this small but delightful country and their people.

4. Forward Look

To conclude, our feeling is that Genetics of Laboratory Rodents course was a very successful event. We developed many collaborations between the speakers and the participants, that will contribute to improve the quality of our research and the exchange of students in the region and the world.

We agree both with the co-organizers and the participants that it would be necessary to establish this kind of course in the Institute more often, every 2 or 3 years, in order to give more opportunities to regional students to participate.

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