Editorial

Fit for Future – Help Healing the World: IFCC-WorldLab in Berlin 2011

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From May 15th to 19th 2011 the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (IFCC) held the 21st International Congress of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine in Berlin, Germany. As usual the IFCC-WorldLab was organized in conjunction with the national meeting of the host country, the 8th Annual Meeting of the German Society of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (DGKL). In 2011 also the biennial EuromedLab, the 19th European Congress of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine of the EFCC took place together with the international congress. The motto of the congress was “Fit for Future – Help Healing the World”. It not only describes the claim of the scientific societies and professionals in the field, but more so the role of modern laboratory diagnostics in today’s medicine. The IFCC-WorldLab is held every 3 years and is one of the biggest events worldwide in the field of in vitro diagnostics. In Berlin, over 4500 registered participants from almost 100 countries attended the congress. There were four plenary sessions, 22 symposia, 14 workshops, plus four IFCC, four EFCC, and six DGKL sessions and the three novel “Year in Review” sessions put together by the congress presidents Harald Renz of the University of Marburg, Germany and Rudolf Tauber of the Charité University Medical Centre, Berlin. The two presidents were supported by an International Advisory Board, an International Scientific Committee and the Congress Organizing Committee. More than 1300 Abstracts were submitted to the congress and were published in a supplement to CCLM [2011;49(Suppl 1):S1–S863]. Altogether these numbers underscored the unique role of this congress as the outstanding international forum for exchange in laboratory diagnostics. One important issue that should be mentioned here is the broad participation of clinicians as speakers, poster presenters, and regular congress guests. This underscores the central role of laboratory diagnostics for everyday clinical practice and the motto of the congress.

While the published abstracts provided immediate on-site information about the topics dealt with during the IFCC-WorldLab, the Editors of CCLM decided that many of the oral presentations were of high interest for the readers of the journal and therefore a selection of these presentations should be published in CCLM. This appeared even more appropriate since CCLM has long standing close ties with the organizing scientific societies, IFCC, EFCC, and DGKL. The final selection of papers from the congress in our opinion represents a good overview of the wealth of the scientific program that was presented to the participants. It should be noted here, that all manuscripts from the congress submitted to CCLM underwent a regular review process to ensure high quality and, in particular, novelty. It is obvious that the final selection published in this issue of CCLM cannot substitute for the congress and its atmosphere of scientific exchange and discussion. However, the different topics and highlights selected for publication, may give an overall impression of the 2011 IFCC-WorldLab. It contains reviews and opinion papers as well as original research papers and represents all types of lectures from plenary to regular symposia.

The reviews cover a broad range of issues relevant to clinical chemistry and laboratory medicine. The status of medical laboratory accreditation in Europe and potential future roads are addressed by Wim Huisman from the Netherlands (1), while quality issues in molecular diagnostics for infectious diseases are discussed by Harald Kessler and Reinhard Raggam from Austria (2). Kurt Voelkerding from the US and coworkers discuss the potential of exome sequencing for clinical diagnostics (3). These more basic issues are complemented by disease oriented reviews, e.g., on multiple sclerosis by Anne Cross from the USA (4), inflammatory bowel disease by Markus Neurath and coworkers from Germany (5), or the prediction of cardiovascular risk by Michel Langlois from Belgium (6), to name just a few. Garry John from the UK has a look back and ahead on HbA1c standardization, which has been an issue of active and ongoing discussion in recent years (7).

The opinion papers deal amongst other topics with novel methodology in coagulation testing, or the determination of therapeutic antibodies. Mauro Panteghini from Italy discusses the inherent difficulties of standardization in laboratory medicine from his point of view (8). Thus, we believe that the articles from the IFCC-WorldLab published in this issue of CCLM not only provide a good representation of the topics presented and discussed during the congress, but are also an invaluable source of information and reference for the readers of the journal. While international meetings like the IFCC-WorldLab are a unique stage for scientific exchange and discussion, the distribution of the various presentations beyond the participants of the congress is important.

It is envisioned that the publication of plenary and symposia presentations and contributions of original research of future IFCC-WorldLab and EuromedLab congresses will become a regular part of the cooperation between the international and European scientific societies and CCLM. The upcoming
congresses are the EuromedLab 2013 in Milan, Italy and the IFCC-WorldLab 2014 in Istanbul, Turkey, and we are looking forward to these events.

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References


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