

BSMM News

Summer 2005



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President's Column

As my first soapbox topic I particularly want to address the positive aspects of medical mycology services in the UK and affirm that we are on an upward spiral. As many of the recent advances are due to the tireless efforts of members of the BSMM I thought it worth highlighting the good things that have been happening.

Let me start with training, which has to be the cornerstone of any service development. The Diploma in Medical Mycology, which is the only higher education qualification in medical mycology available in the UK, signed up its first tranche of students last September (see page 2). It is an achievement of which the BSMM should be immensely proud. Many BSMM members shared their expertise in a comprehensive and very professional array of lectures and there is an ongoing commitment, in the form of provision of continuing supervision and tutorial support for course participants. The latest good news is that there will be the opportunity for current and future students to convert the Diploma to MSc status. Chris Kibbler, as the chair of the BSMM working party on training, is to be congratulated for his energy and commitment in relentlessly pushing this forward and forging the academic links necessary to provide the requisite status. We as a society must also acknowledge our debt to the continuing goodwill and generosity of the major pharmaceutical companies that so generously provided the capital for this venture.

Those of you at the recent, by all accounts highly successful and enjoyable, BSMM annual meeting in

Canterbury (thanks to Fritz Mühlshlegel and his team) will have heard Lewis White give an excellent talk on the progress of the UK consensus group on diagnostic PCR. This group under the chairmanship of Richard Barton has proved that a widely dispersed group of molecular mycologists can work together to define the best test parameters and conditions for diagnostic PCR. The group has reached consensus on a highly sensitive test that can consistently, and moreover, reproducibly across the laboratories, detect small quantities of fungal DNA in spiked samples. The first publication from this group is in preparation. The next step is to define and then refine the best DNA extraction conditions for clinical samples. Again pharmaceutical company support has been invaluable in facilitating this collaboration.

After a challenging time the Mycology Reference Laboratory is now in a strong position with nine full-time and three part-time members of staff. Some of these are training posts thereby we hope addressing the problems of succession planning and securing the future of reference medical mycology. We work hard to provide the best possible support while at the same time developing the service, providing both clinical and laboratory training and enhancing the National Collection of Pathogenic Fungi.

As regards the standard of diagnostic mycology in the wider microbiology community the only real assessment is via the UK National External Quality Assessment Scheme. With the occasional blip, results suggest increasing levels of expertise in the identification of pathogenic yeast and mould isolates. This is due in no small part to the large numbers of individuals who have undertaken mycology courses which includes the popular BSMM Leeds course devised by the late Professor Glyn Evans and now ably organised by Ruth Ashbee. The next one is planned for spring 2006.



An exciting development currently at the planning stage is a web-based registry for invasive fungal infection. This venture, again with pharmaceutical sponsorship, will seek to address the lack of a formal surveillance mechanism for invasive fungal infection in the UK and if all goes to plan will be run through the BSMM.

Finally the embryonic steering committee of the UK Clinical Mycology Network (UKCMN) held its inaugural meeting on 6th June. This network will seek to ensure the provision of the highest standard of clinical mycology services throughout the UK. More to be done, sure, there always will be we hope, it keeps us gainfully employed! To quote a namesake of mine 'finding the solution to a problem changes the problem.'

Hope to see many of you at the 'Blood and Fungi' joint meeting of the BSMM and the British Society for Haematology to be held at Dartington Hall in Devon on 1st – 2nd November.

Keep well and keep up the good work.

Elizabeth Johnson, President, BSMM

BSMM/UCL Diploma in Medical Mycology

We are now nearing the end of the first year of the diploma course. There are six students currently enrolled on the course, a mixture of Biomedical Scientists, Clinical Scientists and Trainee Microbiologists. The benefit of a distance-based learning course is that we are spread across the country, from Southampton to Newcastle and Cardiff to London.

The first year consists of the first two modules of the course. The first module was a mixture of introductory sessions, principles behind pathogenicity of fungi and background to medical mycology and the work of a diagnostic laboratory. The second (current) module focuses in more detail on individual fungal pathogens. Assessment is in the guise of an essay at the end of each module, and exams at the end of the course. Happily, all of us passed the first essay!

The structure of the course is fairly flexible, so allows us to study at our own pace, which fits in well around our otherwise busy lives. The lectures are presented on DVDs which are mailed out to us at regular intervals. DVD-based lectures are a novel way to learn, and serve as a good basis for our further reading. The format also helps to personalise the subject, and it is simple to review the lecture at one's own pace. There is support material on the internet at a UCL-based website (WebCT) which includes revision questions, quizzes and links to further information. There is also an online forum for students to get together and discuss any subject.

At the start of the course there was a two day course held in London, at which all the students met. There were a variety of useful introductory tutorials on IT skills, library use, presenting skills and the like. In May, we all met up in London again for a tutorial with our UCL based tutors, which also gave all of the students a chance to meet up again. We also get regular support from a local tutor and mentor.

Overall, we have enjoyed the course so far. It does take some motivation and commitment to keep up to date with the lectures and work on WebCT, but there is plenty to gain from the DVDs and reading around the subject. All of the students are particularly looking forward to the practical courses in Leeds and Bristol which are an integral part of the course and are planned to run next year.

James Clayton, June 2005

The attached/enclosed flyer gives further information about the UCL/BSMM Diploma in Medical Mycology. However, please note that the telephone number of the programme administrator has changed to 020 7679 9752.

BSMM Travel Grant Report Canterbury 2005

This was my first BSMM meeting and I was pleasantly surprised by the passion shown by those attending for their research. I was also impressed by the quality of the research presented at the meeting. There was a such a broad range of scientists there from different generations and everyone seemed to

get on well together. Those present at the meeting have greatly inspired me to further my research into Candidosis and related topics of public health. The meeting was successful in communicating important scientific advances in mycological research. I greatly enjoyed my time at the meeting and hope to keep in contact with the people I met there.

I particularly enjoyed the poster session and the many high quality posters on display. The way the session allowed scientists of all different backgrounds to mix and exchanged ideas was fantastic. The posters shown had amazing visual impact coupled with excellent scientific content, and all the participants should be congratulated. I was pleased to be given the opportunity to exhibit my work there.



Professor Neil Gow's presentation on Cell wall damage responses in *C. albicans* (photo courtesy of WY Liang)

The oral presentations were the highlight of the meeting with excellent work presented. The friendly and enthusiastic discussion of the research presented certainly brought many positive insights for the participants. The guest speaker Prof. Daniel Poulain, was extremely interesting. I particularly enjoyed many of the other presentations at the meeting concerning the way that clinical practice and research were integrated. I have learned much from these presentations and the associated discussions that followed.

The hospitality, punctuality, schedule and organization of the meeting were first class, as was the kind friendly atmosphere provided by the organisers. The accommodation provided was comfortable and conveniently located. The refreshments and meals, which was a special social

occasion in itself. Canterbury itself was beautiful setting for the meeting and I greatly enjoyed my stay there.

I would like to thank you for providing me with a travel grant from your society to support me with the costs of my attendance at the BSMM annual meeting in Canterbury.



The BSMM choir with the pianist looking on (photos courtesy of WY Liang)

Finally I would like to thank all the people involved in the organization and the smooth running of the meeting.

Nadja Melo, April 2005

Information about BSMM Travel Grants is available at www.bsmm.org.uk

Forthcoming meetings

XXIV International Specialized Symposium on Yeasts, ISSY 2005, September 28th-October 2nd 2005, Orpesa (Castelló) Spain

Details: www.uv.es/issy/index2.htm

7th European Congress of Chemotherapy and Infection, October 19th-22nd 2005, Florence

Details: www.fesci.net

Trends in Medical Mycology 2 (TIMM-2) October 23rd-26th 2005, Berlin

Details: www.timm2005.org



Blood & Fungi
November 1st-2nd 2005

Details: sarah.lapsley@b-s-h.org.uk

FIS 2005
Hosted by the British Society for Antimicrobial
Chemotherapy
November 7th-9th 2005, City Hall, Cardiff
Details: <http://www.fis2005.org.uk/>

2nd ADVANCES AGAINST ASPERGILLOSIS
February 22nd-25th 2006, Athens, Greece

Topics for the conference include:

- Genetic risk factors and *Aspergillus* disease
- *Aspergillus* PCR progress for diagnosis
- Clinical trial design for invasive aspergillosis
- Diagnosing pulmonary aspergillosis
- Resistance and in vitro antifungal testing
- Newer molecular transformation and gene disruption techniques
- Virulence factors elucidated in *Aspergillus* pathogenesis
- Alternative pathogenesis approaches
- Epidemiology of *Aspergillus*
- New antifungal drugs
- Pharmacology and drug interactions with antifungals
- Aspergillosis in solid-organ transplant subpopulations
- Galactomannan assay applications for diagnosis in different subpopulations
- Allergic bronchopulmonary aspergillosis management
- Asthma, allergens and allergic sinusitis with *Aspergillus*
- Environmental exposures to *Aspergillus*
- Immunology and immunotherapy against *Aspergillus*

Details: www.AAA2006.org

8th ASM Conference on Candida and Candidiasis
March 13th-17th 2006, Denver, Colorado
Details: www.asm.org

ASM Conference on Dimorphic Fungal Pathogens
March 13th-17th 2006, Denver, Colorado
Details: www.asm.org

BSMM Annual Meeting
March 26th-28th 2006, Clontarf Castle, Dublin

The plans for BSMM 2006 are very firmly underway. There is a fantastic programme lined up, with confirmed speakers so far including David Soll (Foundation Lecturer), Emmanuel Roilides, Michael Anderson, David Stevens, Margaret Hostetter, Russell Lewis, Rod Hay, Jesús Pla Alonso, Sean Doyle and Malcolm Richardson.

Details: www.bsम्म.org

Eighth International Mycological Congress
20th-25th August 2006, Cairns, Australia
Details: www.sapmea.asn.au/conventions/imc8

New members

The BSMM welcomes four new members, who have joined the society since the last AGM. The new members are: Andrew Borman (Bristol), Megan Lenardon (Aberdeen), Adrien Szekely (Bristol) and Lorna Vale (Cardiff).

Items for the next BSMM Newsletter

Items for publication in the next BSMM Newsletter should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, at the address below.