

Design and Development of a New Diagnostic Microbiology and Epidemiology Track in the General Meeting of the American Society for Microbiology

The mission of the General Meeting Program Committee (GMPC) states, "The ASM General Meeting showcases the central role of microbes in the biosphere by reporting today's best science in the diverse areas influenced by microbes. The breadth of this meeting provides participants opportunities for immersion in fields of specialization as well as forays into different disciplines." Underscoring the critical role of ASM in fostering knowledge of public health and the diagnosis, detection, epidemiology, and treatment of human infectious diseases, the GMPC enthusiastically announces a new Diagnostic Microbiology and Epidemiology Track. This novel track offers more than 24 sessions to be held within the 111th General ASM Meeting in New Orleans in 2011.

The new development of a medical microbiology track parallels the innovative design of a different structure for presenting leading ideas and outstanding speakers in basic microbiology throughout the General ASM Meeting (please refer to the companion editorial [J. F. Miller, M. McFall-Ngai, and A. Casadevall, *mBio* 1(5):e00240-10, 2010]). This new structure of the General Meeting will highlight broadly based topics presented by internationally recognized leaders in the morning sessions. The afternoon symposia are focused on more specific topics, while also including potentially more than 100 openings for presentations of abstracts by trainees and junior faculty. The topics include microbial pathogenesis, molecular genetics, cellular and molecular immunology, molecular biology, environmental microbiology, microbial ecology, evolutionary biology, structural microbiology, microbial physiology, industrial technology and fermentation microbiology, bacteriophages, food microbiology, environmental microbiology, and microbiology education, as related to bacteria, mycobacteria, fungi, protists, and viruses.

The concept for a medical microbiology track was initially introduced during the Divisional Group Chair Meeting on May 24th of this year's 110th Annual Meeting in San Diego to consist of 12 plenary sessions and 12 symposia with a focus on the medical aspects of diagnostic microbiology, public health laboratories, health care-related epidemiology, medical mycology, parasitology, and related disciplines. While these topics were within the traditional domain of Group I (Divisions AA, C, F, L, and Y), other Divisions, including V (Clinical and Diagnostic Immunology) and Z (Animal Health Microbiology), which had a medically related mission, also participated in this concept development. Indeed, Division V would eventually become a member of Group I to reflect its close relationship with diagnostic microbiology. The concept of a medical microbiology track was subsequently discussed in the 2010 General Meeting at several of the Divisional Business Meetings, including those of Divisions C and F, where it was well received.

The ASM Clinical Microbiology Task Force chaired by David Hooper then formed a Clinical Microbiology General Meeting Working Group. Chaired by Robert Sautter (Division C Chair), this Working Group was charged with coordinating the planning of clinical microbiology and related topics to develop this track

concept into a program that would address the training needs and research interests of medically oriented ASM members. This program is now designated the Diagnostic Microbiology and Epidemiology Track.

The establishment of a Diagnostic Microbiology and Epidemiology Track is a historic first within the auspicious tradition of ASM's Annual General Meeting. Topics within this track will encompass clinical microbiology (including medical bacteriology, mycobacteriology, mycology, protozoology, parasitology, and virology), as well as antimicrobial chemotherapy, clinical immunology, health care epidemiology, public health laboratories, and animal health. A request for proposals of sessions pertaining to these topics for the medical microbiology track was announced to the ASM membership. These proposals were reviewed and scored by a large panel of Divisional Chairs, Former Chairs, and Chair-Elects.

A meeting of the Clinical Microbiology General Meeting Working Group was conducted on October 4th and 5th at the ASM Headquarters to develop a detailed program of the Diagnostic Microbiology and Epidemiology Track. Among the participants in this meeting were Roberta Carey (Group I Representative) and Robert Sautter, who served as Co-Chairs, David Hooper, other Divisional Chairs, Chair-Elects, and Division members (David Craft [Div C], Heather Green [Div Y], Thomas Walsh [Div F], Yun Wang [Div V], and David Warshauer [Div L]), Candace Spradley (General Meeting Program Director), and Connie Herdon (ASM Headquarters Representative).

The Working Group organized the sessions of the Diagnostic Microbiology and Epidemiology Track into Core Topics and Symposia. The Core Topics will provide a didactic program that is especially directed at medical technologists and laboratory supervisors. These sessions will provide material to ensure core competencies in many of the critical areas of clinical microbiology. The Core Topics of the Diagnostic Microbiology and Epidemiology Track for 2011 will include new antimicrobial susceptibility testing and reporting recommendations, rapid testing for respiratory viruses, best practices in microbial specimen processing, Gram stain interpretation, malaria smear interpretation, and case studies in parasitology. These sessions will replace the traditional "Sunrise" sessions held in previous Annual Meetings and notably will be held at a later time in the morning. The Symposia will address a wide range of medically important subjects, including antimicrobial resistance, *Clostridium difficile* infections, high-

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throughput diagnostic proteomics, quality control standards, microbiome studies, global health, mycobacteriology, culture-negative biofilms, and diagnostic medical mycology.

A wide variety of formats have been incorporated into the new medical microbiology track. As audience participation in the Core Topics and Symposia is an important aspect of the new track, there will be features fostering audience participation, such as roundtables, panel discussions, case presentations, and other interactive formats. A Point-Counterpoint session will illuminate different perspectives on controversial topics focused on microbiological methods. A microbiology literature review will provide a comprehensive discussion of the recent advances in diagnostic microbiology. To highlight the advances in research conducted by young investigators in the field of diagnostic and public health microbiology, two sessions will be devoted to platform presentation and discussion of outstanding abstracts.

We anticipate that the new Diagnostic Microbiology and Epidemiology Track will serve the educational, training, and research needs of major constituents of ASM, including medical technolo-

gists, laboratory supervisors, laboratory directors, physicians, other health care providers, epidemiologists, infection control practitioners, scientists, veterinarians, and members of industry. We enthusiastically invite you to participate in this exciting new endeavor and look forward to seeing you at the 2011 General Meeting in New Orleans (<http://www.asm.org>)!

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