Beyond Paris 2015; Onward to Athens 2017!

by Dr. Bernard Gouget
Chair, COC and Co-President EuroMedlab Paris 2015; Chair, IFCC Nominations Committee; SFBC-EFLM Representative; Secretary General, International Francophone Federation of Clinical Biology and Laboratory Medicine (FIPBML); Councillor for Public Health and Medical Biology FHF

On Sunday, June 21st in Paris, the summer solstice was upon us and brought extreme daylight. Earth’s orbit around the sun, and the tilt on its axis, have brought us to a place in space where our world’s Northern Hemisphere has its time of greatest daylight: its longest day. From around the world, the solstice also represents a turning point in the year. To many cultures, the solstice can mean a limit or a culmination of something. The 21st IFCC/EFLM European Congress of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine opened under the best possible auspices particularly when this day marked also the “World Music day,” the first day of summer’s annual music celebration! It is an international event, celebrated on the same day in more than 700 cities in 120 countries. The “Fête de la Musique,” is also known as “Make Music Day.” Many free concerts are organized, making all genres of music accessible to the public thanks to performers donating their time for free. To prepare EuroMedlab Paris 2015, the SFBC and the French community of the medical biologists worked like an orchestra gathering all energies and expertise and playing in perfect unison to celebrate the R-evolution in Laboratory Medicine!

EuroMedLab Paris hosted a large delegation of specialists in lab medicine for our profession’s main happening of the year. Almost 10,000 professionals came from 106 countries with 4,120 delegates and 5,500 international visitors (47% from France, 75% from Europe). Among them, the most represented countries: Germany, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, 7% from Eastern Europe; and 1,285 abstracts were presented. EuroMedLab Paris included the Journées Internationales de Biologie (JIB). It was one of the largest biannual lab med conferences worldwide and one of the major European Trade show bringing together over 160 exhibiting medical laboratory suppliers on 4,500 m². We would like to thank the IVD industry for their support and willingness to collaborate actively with this event. Over 4 days, the scientific program emphasized the importance of Lab medicine in patient care and wellness in the 21st century: 27 symposia and 5 plenary lectures, 37 workshops held by industry; and 1,285 abstracts were presented. EuroMedLab Paris 2015 received for this European Congress the green light from EUCOMED. The quality of the organization and that of the scientific program were highly recognized not only by the participants but also by the French and International official institutions which gave their blessings.

The first revolution was the exceptional partnership between the Paris National Opera Ballet production by Alexandra Cardinale and the Local Education Authorities of Paris, intended for delegates to discover the link between science, art, and culture. At the opening, the audience was taken away by the extensive dance repertoire ranging from romantic and classic ballets to creations by Julien Lestel, a contemporary choreographer, before the spellbinding Ravel Bolero. There is evidence that involvement in artistic activities, either as an observer of the creative efforts of others or as an initiator of one’s own creative efforts, can enhance one’s moods, emotions, and other psychological states as well as have a significant impact on important physiological parameters. Between the official speeches and the opening lecture, it was important to have interludes in order to be prepared to listen attentively to the lecture given by Nobel Prize laureate Jules A. Hoffmann on the discoveries concerning the activation of innate immunity.

On behalf of Anne Hidalgo, Mayor of Paris, Mrs. Marie-Christine Lemardeley, deputy Mayor, welcomed the Speakers, the IFCC-EFLM boards and the EFLM national representatives for a common dinner in the prestigious reception rooms of the Paris town hall. Since the French revolution, the Paris city hall building has been the scene of a number of historical events, notably the proclamation of the French Third Republic in 1870 and the famous speech by Charles de Gaulle on August 25, 1944, during the Liberation of Paris when he greeted the crowd from a front window. All this provided the right setting for honoring prominent clinical laboratory scientists from across Europe, with a series of awards recognizing their career achievements in the field (see report on opposite page).

There was enough science for everyone during the day. In the evenings, the Seine and the bridges that cross it, the grands boulevards, the magnificent monuments and the charming streets of Montmartre inspired the foreign visitors. On Wednesday night, the Musée d’Orsay offered an access to a cultural revolution allowing us to appreciate the secret alchemy of colors of the French Impressionist and post-impressionist art, to discuss with our colleagues and the hundreds of young delegates who come for the unique purpose of learning, sharing ideas and stimulate the senior scientists!

It was a tremendous privilege for France to organize with Damien Gruson, Master of Ceremonies, the COC members, Philippe Gillery and the SPC members, Joelle Goudable and the SFBC EB as well as with Francois Blanchecotte and the Syndicat des Biologistes, the 21st edition of EML in Paris, the city of lights and leading city in innovation. None of this would have been possible without the extraordinary efforts and the special contribution of the Paris Convention Bureau, EMMEZETA Congressi and Reed teams, Kuoni, ViParis, and with the constant collaboration with the IFCC and EFLM offices. EuroMedLab Paris 2015 was again a great opportunity to demonstrate that lab medicine is very important to have interludes in order to be prepared to listen attentively to the lecture given by Nobel Prize laureate Jules A. Hoffmann on the discoveries concerning the activation of innate immunity.

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Clinical Laboratory Scientists Honored in EuroMedLab 2015 Reception Held at Resplendent Paris Town Hall

by Dr. Bernard GOUGET, SFBC- EFLM Representative, Counselor for Public Health at the Fédération Hospitalière de France

On behalf of Mrs. Anne Hidalgo, Mayor of Paris, Mrs. Marie-Christine Lamardeley, Deputy Mayor, welcomed the speakers, the IFCC-EFLM boards, and the EFLM national representatives for an official dinner in the prestigious reception rooms of the Paris town hall. She thanked again the EFLM general assembly to decide, four years ago in Berlin, to choose Paris to organize this 21st European Congress of Clinical Biology and Laboratory Medicine. She expressed her gratitude to EFLM representatives for their confidence and congratulated the French Society of Clinical Biology for enabling this project to materialize in Paris. She is convinced the profession of medical biologist is at the core of the care process. It plays an instrumental role in prevention, diagnosis and therapeutic follow up. It benefits today from more and more advanced and innovative tools and techniques to ward off diseases and disabilities.

Paris is proud to have the largest hospital hub in Europe with AP-HP. The City of Paris is constantly taking steps to foster the creation and development of new medical research teams in order to support research in Paris and increase its scientific attractiveness. The medical biologists are really the driving force of this progress. She thanked the assembly for their accomplishments and she expressed her gratitude to the practitioners from AP-HP present at the dinner for their scientific research that contribute to the prestige of the city in France as well as abroad, and permit to improve cares and the quality of treatments for each citizen. Medical biology is the backbone of the medicine of tomorrow that is moving towards a medicine of precision always more effective and better targeted. This is a real revolution in medicine as highlighted by the motto of your conference “Revolution in Laboratory medicine.”

The permanent revolution in the sciences, it is probably one of the reasons why EuroMedLab presidents choose the venue of the town hall tonight. During the Revolution of 1789, the City Hall hosted the Committee of Public Safety. In 1830, the provisional municipal commission was chaired by Lafayette. It is from this very building that the Republic was proclaimed in February 1948 by Lamarque and there again that the central committee of the Commune, elected on March 26, 1871, held its sessions. Forced to pull back by the attack launched by the troops of Versailles at the end of May, the Communards abandoned the place before setting fire to the building “like a jealous lover, who, at the time of death, stabs his mistress.” It was rebuilt as we can see it today with its impressive decors and 2,300 square meters of reception rooms that offer an exceptional panorama of the official art of the late 19th century. These exceptional rooms are worthy of the best museums. 230 sculptors and 96 painters have contributed their talent to the ornamentation of the City Hall.

During the dinner she expected the guests will not going to set fire to the building except to celebrate your brilliant colleagues during the award ceremony! She was also pleased to note the presence of young people among you. The City of Paris helps many young scientists and gives priority to “risk taking” by supporting innovative and original projects. It makes a point of placing innovation and attractiveness at the forefront for this is what makes the prestige of the French Capital. Paris wants to play a leading role in showcasing talents. She thanked again the assembly for coming from so many countries of Europe and other continents to share this dinner tonight. EuroMedLab Paris 2015 will be sparking a real firework of medical biology and laboratory medicine with this dinner. The City of Lights radiated even more brightly at the beginning of Summer 2015!

AWARD RECIPIENTS

Dr. Simone Zerah: EFLM-Roche Award for Laboratory Medicine 2015

Dr. Simone ZERAH was leading a very well-known private medical laboratory specialized in the field of reproduction and prenatal diagnosis in the surrounding areas of Paris. Throughout her professional career, she contributed significantly to the field of in vitro fertilization (IVF). She was member and currently treasurer of the Groupe d’Études de la Fécondation in vitro en France - GEFF (Group for the Study of in vitro Fertilization). Dr. Simone Zerah is a dynamic and subtle lobbyist who was accepted as a member of the World Association of Women Entrepreneurs’ (FCEM). Dr. Simone Zerah has been an European leader in our discipline for more than five decades and has devoted her career to enhancing our profession and to serving laboratory medicine and health care nationally and internationally. She was very active at the national level; board member of the Syndicat des Laboratoires de Biologie Clinique (SLBC), SFBC and SLBC representative at the AFNOR (National Agency for Normalization), member of the executive board of BIOQUALITE (National Association for French Laboratory Qualification). She was also member of the national executive committee in charge of the French reform of the medical laboratory.

Photo: Roche award ceremony at the Paris Town Hall; (from left to right) Prof. Mauro Panteghini, EFLM President; Dr. Simone Zerah, The Roche representative, Ian Watson Past President EFLM
mission relating to the Directive on Recognition of professional qualification and the recognition of the EC4 register as an instrument of professional self-regulation. With the passage of Directive 2013/55/EU through the EU Commission, Council and Parliament she has established laboratory medicine in the front line for recognition when this is transposed into national law in 2016.

Dr. Simone ZERAH received her Pharmacist degree in 1955 (Paris, France). She got the medical biologist specialization in clinical chemistry, hematology, bacteriology, immunology, and coprology in 1959. She received a degree in Radio Immunology in Saclay in 1975. She is a graduate in medically assisted conception from the Jones Institute Norfolk (VA, USA) and in andrology in 1998 (Paris, France).

Dr. Simone ZERAH is widely admired for her sincerity, her high ethical standards, her dedication to service the profession and her very warm personality. In closing, it is with sincere conviction that many EFLM members enthusiastically recommended that Simone Zerah be selected as the recipient of the 2015 EFLM-Roche Scientific Award for Laboratory Medicine.

Prof. Gabor L. Kovacs: Abbott Diagnostics Award for Excellence in Outcomes Research In Laboratory Medicine

Photo: Prof. Mauro Pantegehini, Prof. Gabor, L. Kovacs and Abbott representatives

Prof. Gabor L. Kovacs MD, PhD, DSc, graduated from the University of Pecs, specialized in laboratory medicine and in neuroendocrinology. He became full professor in 1997, member of the Hungarian Academy of Science in 2004. He is the president of the newly established Szentágothai Research Centre of the University of Pécs. He is a leading expert in various national and international laboratory organizations: past-president of the Hungarian Society of Laboratory Medicine, member of Communication and Publication Division of the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine, editor-in-chief of the Electronic Journal of the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry.

Prof. Pierre Valdiguié: SFBC-EuroMedLab Paris 2015 Award

Award was presented to Prof. Valdiguié for his outstanding contribution to the profession and distinguished international services. Prof. Pierre M Valdiguié, Msc, MD, PhD, was at the Head of the Laboratory of Chemical Pathology at the Purpan and Rangueil University Hospital in Toulouse (FR). His Research in clinical Chemistry was dedicated to the Data processing and expert systems within the clinical laboratories: technical validation at the bench level and final validation, control of request protocols- Evaluation of analyzers and techniques or reagents- External quality assurance programs using telematics. He was Head of an Academic Research team at the Faculty de Medicine of Toulouse Rangueil and the researches were focusing on Peroxidation of LDL in vitro. He was President of the regional association for external quality assurance scheme; Elected member of the administrative council of the Toulouse hospitals from 1986 to 1991; President of FESCC, forum of European Societies of Clinical Chemistry from 1989 to 1993 and President of the French Society of Clinical Pathology (Société française de biologie clinique, SFBC), from 1990 to 1992.

Dr. Véronique Ducros: SFBC-Award For Distinguished Contribution in Education and Patient Care

Photo: left to right: Dr. Véronique Ducros and Joelle Goudable
 Award was presented to Dr. Ducros for her extraordinary contribution in establishing and developing educational materials for the laboratory medicine discipline. Dr. Véronique Ducros, is assistant professor at the University of Grenoble (France) department of biochemistry, toxicology, and pharmacology. She was co-chairing the SFBC Scientific committee during 6 years and she is currently coordinating with success the French Module of Lab Tests Online.

Dr. Joseph Henny: SFBC Distinguished Medical Biologist Award

Dr. Joseph Henny, PhD, pursued his studies at the University of Lorraine (formerly Nancy). Then he served as director of the clinical laboratory at the Centre for Preventive Medicine in Nancy. Since 2009, he is responsible for the constitution of a Biobank devoted to large population studies related to the "Constances Cohort Project" launched by UMS 011 INSERM (Centre for Research in Epidemiology and Population Health)—Versailles Saint-Quentin University. He is also in charge of the scientific and technical coordination of the Medical Laboratories Network of the French Health Periodic Examination Centers. He is participating in several regional and national programs in the domains of Public Health in collaboration with regional and/or national health operators (such as French Institute for Public Health Surveillance). He serves as reviewer for various journals (Clinical Chemistry, Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine, Clinica Chimica Acta, etc.).

His scientific interest is primarily in the field of the study of the effects of biological variations on laboratory tests, he is working on developing reference values and related concepts. Further, he has been an active participant in numerous studies seeking to better understand biologic and preanalytical variability, including standardization of laboratory tests.

Since the eighties Joseph Henny has been actively involved in the SFBC. He has also occupied the post of treasurer and general secretary of the SFBC. He is an active member of several national scientific societies and member of several working groups and committee at national and international level. It was a full member of the Reference Intervals and Decision Limits Committee (C-RIDL) of the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (IFCC-LM).

Dr. F.K. Liton: Best Poster ELAS-forum

Photo: Joelle Goudable, SFBC President with Dr. Joseph Henny.

Photo: Dr. F.K. Liton from Turku (Finland) with Dr. Pierre-Jean Lamy, President of the European Ligand Assay Society.

Dr. Ferdhos Khan Liton, MSc, has been working as a PhD student at the University of Turku Graduate School in the Division of Biotechnology with the funding obtained through a three-year scholarship from the FP7 Marie-Curie Initial Training Network (ITN): Prostate Research Organizations Network of early Stage Training (PRO-NEST) under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Kim Pettersson since 2010. His main research interests are immunoaassays for prostate cancer diagnostics. He is now studying the clinical value of intact and nicked free prostate-specific antigen (PSA) in blood as well as various kallikrein forms in urine. Dr. Ferdhos Khan Liton completed his MSc at the University of Rajshahi (Bangladesh) in 2006 with Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. He also completed another MSc at the University of Skövde (Sweden) in 2009 with Biomedicine as his major subject. Liton worked as a Biotechnologist at Z.H. Sikder Women’s Medical College & Hospital in Dhaka (Bangladesh). He had been granted a travel award from the EAU Section of Urological Research (ESUR) in 2012, Strasbourg (France) and the best poster award from EuroMedLab Milano 2013 congress. Liton has one research paper as a first author and two papers as a coauthor. Along the research work, he is supervising undergraduate students.

Alere Strengthens Core Business
With Two Strategic Transactions

Alere Inc. (Waltham, MA, USA; www.alere.com), a leader in rapid diagnostics, continues to strengthen focus on its core business strategy through an agreement to sell BBI Group and an acquisition of US Diagnostics (Huntsville, AL, USA; http://usdiagnostics.com).

On July 2, 2015, Alere signed an agreement to sell its BBI business to the UK-based firm Exponent Private Equity LLP for a total purchase price equivalent to approximately USD 164 million, including up to USD 47 million in contingent consideration. The final purchase price is subject to a working capital adjustment. BBI Group provides products and services for the diagnostic, healthcare, research, defense, and food industries.

The close of the BBI sale is subject to regulatory approvals, including applicable anti-trust authorization, approvals by CFUIS (Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States) and from the Directorate of Defense Trade Controls of the US Department of State. Alere expects to use the majority of the proceeds from the sale to pay down existing indebtedness.

In the second transaction, Alere has acquired substantially all assets of US Diagnostics (US-D) for USD 60 million in cash. US-D is a leading provider of drug testing devices and is currently a distributor of Alere Toxicology products.

Qiagen in Korean Diagnostics Alliance

In a new collaboration, Seegene Inc. (Soul, Republic of Korea; www.seegene.com) will use its proprietary next-generation qPCR technology in developing new multiplex assays for the flagship platform of Qiagen NV (Venlo, Netherlands and Hilden, Germany; www.qiagen.com). Seegene will develop a menu of multiplex assay panels for the modular QiAsymphony RQ MDx automation platform, the first project being panels to profile infectious diseases. Seegene’s technologies can test for multiple targets with high sensitivity, reproducibility, and the panels offer significant medical value“, said Thierry Bernard, Qiagen senior vice president, “QiAsymphony is adding significant value for users as the growing menu of clinically proven diagnostics allows labs to consolidate more tests on one system. The new tests will be highly synergistic with our current menu. Already one of the most widely placed mediums throughputs systems, QiAsymphony is revolutionizing workflows with cost-effective processing from sample to insight.”

Cancer Genetics Signs Accord
With Large New England Healthcare Network

Under the terms of a new agreement between Cancer Genetics, Inc. (CGI; Morrisville, NC, USA; www.cancergenetics.com) and Harvard Pilgrim Healthcare (Hartford, CT; USA; www.harvardpilgrim.org), a health care network covering over one million people throughout Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Maine, CGI will offer its cancer diagnostic services to individuals covered under Harvard Pilgrim plans.

Harvard Pilgrim’s extensive provider network includes over 135 hospitals and 28,000 clinicians, among them physicians who practice in a variety of settings, including individual practices, small medical groups, and large multi-specialty groups. As part of the agreement, the Harvard Pilgrim’s network will have access to the full range of oncology-focused proprietary tests offered by CGI.

Working with provider networks is central to CGI’s multi-part access and reimbursement strategy. By establishing relationships with leading payers and insurance companies, CGI plans to expand access to and reimbursement for its leading-edge genomic tests to help providers appropriately manage and personalize treatment.