The IFCC Office is based in Milan and is responsible for carrying out, under the direction of the EB and in conjunction with Division and Committee members, all the administrative and communication activities of the Federation. The IFCC Office reports to the EB through the Secretary.

The IFCC Office is responsible for the efficient administration of IFCC affairs and maintains the Archives of the organization. The IFCC Office is responsible for day-to-day financial operations, for all contacts with Member societies and it also assists the regional organizations with which the IFCC has agreements. The IFCC Office is staffed by two full-time and one part-time paid employee.

Paola Bramati, in IFCC since 2005, is responsible for the contacts with the Executive Board Members. She is in charge for the activities related to the IFCC membership (Full Members, Affiliates and Corporate), as well as the Scientific Division, Task Forces and Administrative duties linked to IFCC Finances.

Paola’s background is connected to communication, tourism and marketing. Before joining IFCC, she has been working for more than 15 years in the airline business dealing with day-to-day passengers’ operations, sales, marketing, and pricing. Her education is related to foreign cultures and languages, as she had the chance to study abroad learning English, Spanish, French, and German.

Silvia Cattaneo, in IFCC since February 2010, is in charge for the activities of the Congresses and Conferences Committee, as well as of the Education and Management Division. She is also the contact person inside the IFCC Office for the European Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (EFCC).

Silvia has a past as Congress Organizer. For more than two decades, she collaborated with the Italian Society of Clinical Chemistry and Clinical Molecular Biology where she was responsible for the organization of the educational activities. Silvia has strong organizational skills and a great aptitude for analyzing problems and developing solutions as well as creating logical working procedures.

Silvia Colli-Lanzi, in IFCC since January 2011, is in charge for the activities of the Communication and Publications Division as well as those related to IFCC special projects, such as Professional Exchange Programs, Scholarships, and Awards.

Silvia Colli-Lanzi has been working in the communication industry for more than a decade and she is responsible for the office activities for two Italian scientific Associations. She is also responsible for the press desk and the communication activities for some Italian and international companies, managing the relations with the press and carrying on all the PR activities on their behalf.

Photo: (From left to right) Silvia Colli-Lanzi, Paola Bramati, and Silvia Cattaneo.

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t he Sociedad Española de Bioquímica Clínica y Patología Molecular (Spanish Society of Clinical Biochemistry and Molecular Pathology), first known as the Sociedad Española de Química Clínica, SEQC (Spanish Society of Clinical Chemistry), was founded in 1975 by Prof. Enrique Concustell and counted 25 Founding Members. It is presently presided over by Prof. Francisco Alvarez.

The first scientific meeting was held in the first year, and the General Assembly of members created the first two committees: Education and Quality. The Commission of Units, Standards and Nomenclature rapidly followed in 1977, and a relationship with the IUPAC Committee of Clinical Chemistry was established in 1978. The same year the SEQC organized its First National Congress, which was followed by an International Symposium on Automation in Clinical Chemistry in 1979: that was the beginning of the future International Congress of Automation.

The Scientific Committee that joined all the commissions and working groups, and the first Bulletin (Newsletter) were created the same year. In 1992, SEQC created the Publications Committee, which publishes books and translations of NCCLS documents, in addition to the newsletter and the scientific journal.

The year 1980 saw the creation of the Quality Control Commission with the initial participation of 147 laboratories. This achievement was however marred by the premature death of the Society’s President Prof. Enrique Concustell, in car accident.

The 1980’s reflected an intense scientific involvement of the SEQC. The first issue of Society’s journal Quimica Clinica appeared in 1982. It was also the same year that the Society organized the First International Congress on Automation and New Technologies in Barcelona, and that was followed by a second congress in 1984. In 1986, it hosted the Third Mediterranean and Near East African Congress of Clinical Chemistry in Seville. At the local level, the SEQC has regularly organized courses on various topics and annual scientific “Jornadas” since 1987.

The scientific activities culminated in 1990 with the organization of the joint IX National Congress, the IV International Congress on Automation and New Technologies and the II International Congress of TDM-Tox in Barcelona with 1,300 registered participants, 30 symposia, four plenary conferences, 22 workshops, 475 posters, 37 oral presentations, 1,400 m² of commercial area and 35 exhibitors.

In 1993, the SEQC changed its name to the “Sociedad Española de Bioquímica Clínica y Patología Molecular” (Spanish Society of Clinical Biochemistry and Molecular Pathology) to reflect the scientific and professional development that had occurred in the last 20 years. The acronym SEQC, is however, still widely used, as it is deeply rooted in the professional community.

The establishment of the Society’s website in 1997, which coincided with new phase of the annual Education program, is another hallmark of the SEQC history as it led in 1982 to the creation of the IFCC Rincón Iberoamericano website that was hosted and maintained by the Society for many years.

The involvement of the SEQC in the development of the profession has never failed through the years. It did so by organizing or sponsoring National and International meetings such as the Congreso Nacional del Laboratorio Clínico and the 3rd International Symposium of the Federation of European Societies on Trace Elements and Minerals (FESTEM) in Santiago de Compostela in 2007, and the 22nd AACC International Symposium on Critical and Point-of-Care testing. In terms of publication, the Society together with 2 other sister societies sponsor the new journal Revista del Laboratorio Clínico since 2009.

Nowadays, SEQC counts more than 2,100 members of which over 300 are involved in commissions, committees, and working groups including those of IFCC and EFCC.

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Spanish Society of Clinical Biochemistry and Molecular Pathology: A History

by Felip Antoja, Secretary of the Spanish Society of Clinical Biochemistry and Molecular Pathology, Member of the IFCC Newsletter Working Group

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Dr. Jocelyn Naicker appointed Chair of the National Health Laboratory Services (NHLS) Expert Committee on Chemical Pathology

SAACB Council member Dr. Jocelyn Naicker was appointed to Chair the National Health Laboratory Services (NHLS) Expert Committee on Chemical Pathology. The SAACB would like to congratulate her on this appointment.

SAACB involved in the organization of the Africa Health Medilab Meeting

SAACB was involved in the organization of the Academic Program of the Africa Health Medilab meeting that took place at NASREC, Johannesburg from May 10-12, 2011. This meeting brought various health organizations and medical specialties including Surgery, Medicine, Obstetrics, and Radiology under one roof. SAACB would like to thank Prof. Delport, Prof. Erasmus, Dr. Naicker and Dr. Zemlin for participating in this meeting.

Dr. Remaley from the NIH (USA) Guest at the SAACB Annual Congress

This year’s invited guest to the South African Association for Clinical Biochemistry (SAACB) annual congress (Sandton City Convention Center) is Dr. Remaley (NIH) from the USA. Please visit the SAACB website to get more details. The meeting will be held from September 1-4, 2011. This year’s meeting will also involve medical technologists.
For many years, the leading organization that dealt with the development of the profession of medical biochemistry in Serbia has been the Society of Medical Biochemists of Serbia (formerly Society of Medical Biochemists of Yugoslavia). As part of the healthcare system reforms conducted in the last decade, the Law of Healthcare Workers Chambers, was adopted six years ago. Medical biochemists were the first that completely implemented the law, constituted Assembly of the Chamber and five years ago delivered the first licenses. Prof. Dr. Nada Majkic-Singh was the first elected president of the Assembly, and Dr. Velibor Canic the first elected director of the Chamber.

The Chamber of Biochemists is professional organization of medical biochemists and clinical chemists with the mandatory membership for colleagues working in public healthcare institutions and private practice. In accordance with the Law, the Chamber has a number of public authorities, including the definition of codex of professional ethics, keeping directory of all the members of the Chamber, issuing, renewing and depriving the licenses for independent practice to all of the members, representing and protecting professional interests of members, proposing the list of supervisors for external quality audit, organizing Court of Honor for determination of violation of professional duties and responsibilities of members, and many others.

What are the first and obvious benefits of the work of such an organization? First of all, with the introduction of licenses, which have to be renewed every seven years, professional development has achieved continuity. Medical biochemists and clinical chemists in Serbia today are more focused to continuous education after graduation - in order to keep their license they need to collect 24 credits per year minimum. Thanks to attendance of various courses, seminars, symposia, congresses, more colleagues are now up-to-date with latest developments in the practice of laboratory medicine, which enable them to implement this new knowledge in their every day workload. Also, more educational courses are organized throughout the year than before. In addition, with one of the major activities of the Chamber - the enhancement of control of the work of laboratories throughout the whole territory of Republic of Serbia, the quality of their work is significantly improving, which is evident in the results of our national external quality assessment scheme (SNEQAS). Furthermore, all laboratories, both in private and in public healthcare system, are encouraged and advised by the Chamber to commence the accreditation process according to standard ISO 15189.

The Chamber of Biochemists of Serbia has been created five years ago. Every four years delegates for the Assembly, Supervisory Board, Steering Committee, Commission for Mediation, Director, and Court of Honor are elected. Last year, we had elections and the first convening, when the session of the constituent assembly handed over its duties to new delegates. We are all confident that they will continue the fruitful work of their predecessors.
Immunizations are a cornerstone of a nation’s efforts to protect people from a host of infectious diseases. Large-scale implementation of vaccination programs during the past thirty years has led to a spectacular reduction in illness and death due to diseases preventable by vaccines.

The European region of World Health Organization (WHO) was declared free of poliomyelitis in 2002, and for these past 6 years, cases of measles in the Region have decreased by more than 90%. However, further efforts are necessary. In Europe, nearly 650,000 children do not receive their first dose of measles vaccine, a fundamental requirement to satisfy for vaccination; and there remain still vulnerable populations in every country. Paradoxically, the fact that vaccination has led to a situation where numerous infectious disease have become rare or seldom heard from, sometimes leads some parents and health professionals to believe that vaccines are no longer necessary. As a result, the public confidence in these vaccinations is regularly shaken by accused harmful, even dramatic, side effects, and may be threatened by the influence of groups opposed to vaccination and websites dedicated to their movement. It has reached the point that parents are increasingly hesitant to immunize their children, because they are afraid of making them sick rather than protecting them.

For the first time since 1994, the American Institute of Medicine (IOM) published a well-documented report on the risks linked to eight commonly administered vaccines. This synthesis of more than a thousand studies shows that serious side effects caused as a result of injections remain very rare. The vaccines studied are those that protect against seasonal influenza (H1N1 excluded), hepatitis B, papillomavirus (HPV) (notably responsible for cervical cancer), hepatitis A, meningitis (meningococcal vaccines), the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) triple combination, tetanus, or even varicella. The IOM has studied more than a hundred cause-effect relationships between a vaccine and a more or less serious side effect. They rejected the existence of a link between MMR and autism; a study published in 1998 on this subject had created a panic in the English-speaking world. The same vaccine does not lead to type 1 diabetes either. As for seasonal flu vaccines, they do not aggravate asthma and are not responsible for peripheral facial paralysis.

Conversely, side effects already known to physicians were confirmed. All the vaccines studied, except those against hepatitis A and papillomavirus (HPV), can cause strong allergic reactions called anaphylactic shock. All, without exception, regularly cause shoulder pain and fainting. MMR may cause febrile convulsions following very high fevers in young children, even rare cases of encephalitis with inclusions that damage the nervous system. However, in the large majority of cases, the existing studies are not sufficient for the experts to be able to validate or reject the cause-effect link. This was notably the case when the number of cases counted was too low to generalize, like for the papillomavirus vaccine. In France, two girls filed a claim because they believed they were the victim of Gardasil side effects. However, the link yet remains to be proven scientifically.

The IOM report was not intended to guide nervous parents, but rather to inform the organization that compensates people who contracted an illness after a vaccine. It does not specify the frequency at which adverse effects are observed. Its authors point out, however, that vaccines remain one of the most powerful tools in the health system. Nevertheless, having a basic understanding of how patients and parents view vaccine risk and developing effective approaches to address vaccine safety concerns are imperative for vaccination providers. Each person understands and reacts to vaccine information based on different factors, including previous experience, education, personal values, method of data presentation, perceptions of the risk for disease and perceived ability to control these risks, and risk preference. Increasingly, decisions about vaccination are based on inaccurate information about risk provided by the media and certain websites. Websites and other sources of vaccine information might be inaccurate or incomplete. The specialist in laboratory medicine together with health-care providers can be a pivotal source of science-based credible information by discussing the risks from and benefits of vaccines, which help patients make informed decisions. When a parent or patient initiates a discussion about a perceived vaccine adverse reaction, the health-care provider should discuss the specific concerns and provide factual information. Effective, empathetic vaccine risk communication using appropriate language is essential in responding to misinformation and concerns.

Vaccines are continually monitored for safety and like any medication; a decision not to immunize a child also involves risk and could put the child and others who come into contact with him or her at risk of contracting a potentially deadly disease.

Every year, vaccination saves millions of human lives and this great success in terms of public health must continue. European countries must share precise, nuanced, and clear information on the risks linked to diseases and the advantages of vaccination. By recognizing that each child deserves good health from the beginning of his existence, specialists in laboratory medicine can benefit from the impetus given by WHO to conduct an awareness campaign and to enhance vaccination systems. As health care providers, we should work closely with public health agencies and other health partners to improve and sustain immunization coverage and to monitor the safety of vaccines so that this public health success story can be maintained and expanded in this beginning of the new century.

**Promoting Vaccination Programs**

By Dr. Bernard Gouget

**EFCC Corner**

**New EFCC Executive Board Members**

**Prof. Mauro Panteghini**

Prof. Mauro Panteghini, MD, is full professor of Clinical Biochemistry and Clinical Molecular Biology at the University of Milan (Italy) Medical School. Prof. Panteghini holds directorships in the chairs of Clinical Biochemistry and Clinical Molecular Biology at the Medical School of the University of Milan and at the Center for Metrological Traceability in Laboratory Medicine (CIPMe) of the University of Milan, and leads the Accredited Reference Laboratory for Enzyme Standardization (a JCTLM listed reference laboratory). Prof. Panteghini has served in numerous international and national scientific capacities in laboratory medicine, and has held many positions within the IFCC and the JCTLM. He is editor-in-chief of Biochimica Clinica, the official journal of the Italian Society of Clinical Biochemistry and Clinical Molecular Biology (SIBioC). He has published numerous manuscripts and abstracts, and lectures at many national and international congresses, meetings, and symposia.

**Dr. Ana-Maria Simundic**

Ana-Maria Simundic, PhD, heads the Emergency Laboratory department at the Sestre Milosrdnice University Hospital in Zagreb (Croatia). Dr. Simundic graduated from the faculty of Pharmacy and Biochemistry University of Zagreb, where she defended her masters and PhD theses, and was awarded the title Assistant Professor. Dr. Simundic also received training at the university of Connecticut (USA) Health Center, where worked on molecular genetic techniques and did research on developmental biology. Currently Dr. Simundic is the Editor-in-Chief of Biochemia Medica, the journal of the Croatian Society of Medical Biochemists. She chairs the Committee for Public Relations for the Croatian Society of Biochemistry, and is the EFCC National representative for Croatia. Dr. Simundic also functions as ISO 15189 accreditation assessor for Molecular Diagnostics and General clinical chemistry. Her work experience includes teaching courses at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

**Dr. Huibert Storm**

Dr. Huibert Storm is a clinical chemist, head of laboratory at the Stichting KCL Medical Center in Leeuwarden (The Nederlands). Dr. Storm, a graduate biochemist, received his PhD from the University of Leiden (The Nederlands). He is the past president of the Netherlands Society for Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (NVKC). During his tenure as president of NVKC he hosted the successful EUROMEDLAB 2007 in Amsterdam (The Nederlands), which was honored by a visit from HM Queen Beatrix. Dr. Storm founded the NVKC working group for molecular biology, and was member of a committee on DNA-diagnostics of the Health Council of The Netherlands advising the minister of health. At present, Dr. Storm is president representative of NVKC for IFCC and EFCC. His major professional, scientific, and clinical interests lie in the field of molecular biology, hematomocology, and flow cytometry.
At the end of June this year, the Society of Medical Biochemists of Serbia once again had the pleasure to welcome colleagues to the 7th IFCC Symposium for the Balkan Region organized traditionally under the auspices of the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry (IFCC) and European Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (EFCC) in Belgrade. This year, the Symposium was dedicated to the burning issue of biomarkers, entitled “Biomarkers: From Standardization to Performance.” As in the past six years, many prominent lecturers marked this meeting.

In the first section, Prof. Nada Majkic-Singh (Institute for Medical Biochemistry, Clinical Center of Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia) acquainted us with biomarkers, the process of their validation, and development of guidelines for biomarker application in her lecture entitled “What is a Biomarker? From Discovery to Clinical Application.” Prof. Mauro Pantheghini's lecture (Department of Clinical Sciences “Luigi Sacco,” University of Milan, Italy) was about standardization approaches and definition of performance requirements for heterogeneous biomarker assays. Professor Patrick M. M. Bossuyt (Department of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Academic Medical Center, University Amsterdam, The Netherlands) defined biomarker performance and clinical validity, expressed in terms of the marker’s accuracy, and summarized and presented the available measures of diagnostic accuracy.

The second section was dedicated to the use of biomarkers in cardiovascular events and it opened with Prof. Victor Blaton’s talk (Department of Clinical Chemistry, Hospital AZ Sing-Jan AV, Brugge, Belgium) about novelties among prospective markers in this field. Prof. Grazyna Sypniewska (Department of Laboratory Medicine, Collegium Medicum, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Bydgoszcz, Poland) presented results of her group’s study about the performance of apolipoproteins B and A by comparing apolipoprotein concentrations and apoB:apoA-I with traditional lipid measures and atherogenic indices as biomarkers in acute coronary syndrome patients. Adriana Unic (Clinical Department of Laboratory Diagnostics, Dubrava University Hospital, Zagreb, Croatia) summarized the recent progress in the diagnostic use of copeptine, C-terminal part of the arginine vasopressin precursor peptide found to be stable and sensitive marker for antidiuretic hormone release in cardiovascular diseases. The section was closed by Sanja Stankovic (Institute of Medical Biochemistry, Clinical Centre of Serbia, 7th IFCC Symposium for Balkan Region Biomarkers: From Standardization to Performance by Snezana Jovicic, Institute of Medical Biochemistry, Clinical Centre of Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia

Photo IMG-0961: Symposium lecturers during trip to Mokra Gora (from left to right): Aslan Diler, Grazyna Sypniewska, Bernard Gouget, Nada Majkic-Singh, Patrick MM Bossuyt, Sanja Stankovuc, Victor Blaton.
Biomarkers: From Standardization to Performance

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Belgrade, Serbia) with an overview of potential new roles for myeloperoxidase as biomarker in cardiovascular disease.

The second day of the symposium started with Dr. Bernard Gouget (Federation Hospitaliere France, Paris, France), who opened the third section with his special lecture on translational research. Prof. Philippe Gillery (Laboratory of Pediatric Biology and Research - University Hospital of Reims and Laboratory of Medical Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Faculty of Medicine of Reims, France) introduced non-enzymatic posttranscriptional modification-derived products as new biomarkers of protein aging. This section was concluded with Prof. Diler Aslan’s lecture (Pamukkale University School of Medicine, Department of Medical Biochemistry, Denizli, Turkey), where biomarkers recommended for prediction or diagnosis of diabetes complications in the clinical practice and laboratory medicine guidelines were reviewed and the results of several clinical studies were summarized.

The fourth section started with the lecture about a novel combination of biomarkers for the prediction of ovarian cancer, including human epididymis 4 protein (HE4) and CA125, presented by Prof. Vojiša Rizos (Medicinski Fakultet, University of Athens, Greece). Prof. Andrea Griessmacher (Central Institute of Medical and Chemical Laboratory Diagnostics, LHU - University Hospital of Innsbruck, Austria) continued with the overview of biomarkers for bone turnover. This section was concluded with the review of biomarkers of fetal anomalies incorporated in first and second trimester screening strategies presented by Prof. Svetlana Ignjatovic (Institute of Medical Biochemistry, Clinical Center of Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia).

The fifth and last section was traditionally dedicated to experience from Balkan region in the use and development of biomarkers. It started with the lecture of Miroslava Jankovic (Institute for the application of Nuclear Energy - INEP, University of Belgrade, Serbia) about the status and perspective of glycans as biomarkers, and about the glycome as promising source of new biomarkers. Afterwards, Prof. Majkic-Singh, Prof. Blaton, and Prof. Ignjatovic chaired the round table discussion on presented topics.

This closed the formal part of the symposium, but it continued outside Belgrade. The two following weekend days the participants and lecturers spent on the road, or on the railroad to be precise. They went on the nostalgic travel through time with the Blue Train - a special train used for the needs of Josip Broz Tito, lifelong President of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It is one of the most famous and most popular trains in the whole world, built in 1959 for special needs of President Tito. Designed as a place that provides accommodation, working conditions and opportunity to complete all protocol obligations while traveling, this train was real residence on wheels in the country and abroad. The destination was Mokra Gora, a mountain in the western part of Serbia, between mountains Zlatibor and Tara. There, they have changed the accommodation of the presidential train with “Sargan eight,” another curiosity of the Railway Museum of Serbia. From 1925 to 1974, this was the popular route from Belgrade to Dubrovnik and Zelenika on the Adriatic coast, where on 760 mm narrow-gauge track, through tunnels, over the bridges and through mountain gorges, ran the famous steam locomotive train “Cira.”

Now, one part of this railway is renewed on the route from station Sargan Vitis to Mokra Gora, which represents unique construction work, as it passes through 22 tunnels, over five bridges, overcoming a grade of 300 meters, and all that on a total distance of 15,440 meters. Here, the participants had an opportunity to see all the beauty and richness of the nature of this region. The visit to the town ofDrvengrad was unforgettable. Situated on the top of Mecavnik hill, Drvengrad (Wooden Town) was built by the world famous film director Emir Kusturica after the shooting of his film “Life is a miracle” in the site of Mokra Gora. Drvengrad presents unique ethno village, typical settlement of this area of 19th century, consisting of wooden buildings, such as so-called cottages, characteristic for living on the nearby mountains.

After two days of enjoying the intact nature of Western Serbia and its food specialties, the caravan of biochemists arrived back to Belgrade’s Main Railway Station. This definitely ended this year’s EFCC Symposium for Balkan Region, leaving all participants with valuable new knowledge of biomarkers, as well as with some unforgettable memories.

New EFCC Executive Board Members

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Prof. Tomás Zima

Prof. Tomás Zima, MD, DSc, PhD, MBA, is the Dean of the First Faculty of Medicine, Charles University Prague (Czech Republic), consultant to the Czech Republic Ministry of Education, and professor of Medical Chemistry and Biochemistry. Prof. Zima graduated with honors from Charles University, where he obtained his MD, a PhD in biochemistry, and the higher doctorate, DSc. He has also earned an MBA from Prague International Business School at the University of Economics (IBBS).

His research is focused on oxidative stress, new diagnostic techniques, screening for Down’s syndrome, tumor markers, and the metabolism of alcohol. He is a PhD lecturer in Biochemistry and Pathobiochemistry. Prof. Zima is the author of four monographs and many articles. He is the winner of numerous awards, among them Award of the Rector of Charles University. Prof. Zima is a member of the Czech Medical Academy, president of the Czech Society of Clinical Biochemistry, Chairperson of the Executive Committee of FEBS (Federation of the Societies of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology), and several other national and international professional organizations. He is the Editor-in-Chief of Folia Biologica and Addictology.