



## Editorial

# A remarkable 'death on the rocks'

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In a fast-moving and competitive area of research the pressure is on, especially for young scientists. In an ideal world going to meetings to exchange information, ideas, reagents and initiate collaborations should help you to be on top of the latest developments in your field and move your project along at a swift pace. The reality is that most conferences have become so expensive that students and postdocs can hardly afford to attend. Moreover, they frequently stage the 'great and the good' and not those working at the bench, and due to competition secrecy about unpublished data is the rule rather than the exception.

Four eager and energetic researchers (Michel Hahne, Vincenzo De Laurenzi, Jan Paul Medema and Henning Walczak) working on apoptosis have taken it upon themselves to try and make a difference (see also *Nature* 392: 211; 393: 206; 393: 618). With a handful of sponsors

and a budget of 15,000,000 Lira (\$8,000) they arranged a 4-night, 3-day meeting in L'Aquila, Italy, for the young and upcoming rather than the firmly established scientists. It wasn't name and fame, but only an interesting abstract that could win you an invitation, and none of the 52 selected speakers had to pay anything other than their travel expenses. Others were welcome to present their work but had to pay a modest fee for their accommodation.

Rightly or wrongly, publications in high-profile journals do count, and with vultures circling over every competitive field, some hesitated to share their latest successes. Nevertheless, most of the data presented were raw and unpublished (see meeting report this issue). Progress as well as disappointments were freely discussed, and rather than impressing or oppressing peers, it was curiosity and willingness to help that prompted the questions asked. Due to popular demand these organisers promised to host another meeting in the year 2000. It comes strongly recommended.