

Change Is in the Air...

At this midpoint in my tenure as President of the Society of Mucosal Immunology, I am pleased to take this opportunity to highlight some of the exciting changes taking place in our Society that I believe are having a beneficial impact on our community. First, I am pleased to report that our membership continues to grow vigorously, in large part due to the activities of Brian Kelsall (Bethesda), Paul Garside (Glasgow), and Jo Viney (Seattle) as the Editor-in-Chief and Deputy Editors of our Journal, *Mucosal Immunology*. This is the seventh issue, and it marks the completion of our first year of publication with the Nature Publishing Group. *Mucosal Immunology* is rapidly emerging as a major destination for high-quality original papers and reviews from superb contributors within the broad scope of topics related to mucosal immunology. At this juncture, with all the articles now accessible for identification through PubMed, the contributions of the Journal to our community are potentially vast.

Second, the key mission of our Society is to promote excellence in research and education in the field of mucosal immunology and to foster communication among immunologists. Consistent with this mission, we are pleased to report that over the past year, Maria Rescigno (in Milan, Italy) and Kenneth Beagley (in Callaghan, Australia) have worked vigorously to provide a major overhaul of our Society's webpage, which now includes a variety of new, user-friendly features such as a portal to web-based membership management, a link to the Journal, information about relevant international meetings, and a new career center. We encourage our members to visit the website at <http://www.socmucimm.org> and take advantage of these and many other features that represent important opportunities for learning and networking.

On the website there is a link to information on the 14th International Congress of Mucosal

Immunology (ICMI), scheduled to be held in Boston, Massachusetts, 5–9 July 2009. This meeting follows very successful meetings in 2007 in Tokyo and 2005 in Boston; nearly 800 scientists in the broad fields of mucosal immunology assembled at each meeting. The 14th ICMI, chaired by Thomas MacDonald (London), President-Elect, and Scott Snapper (Boston), is developing into another dynamic meeting. It will host 35 keynote and plenary speakers who will present exciting new information in areas that relate to the molecular basis of microbial immune interactions at the mucosal surfaces, along with new insights into the understanding of mucosal diseases in humans, regulatory cells and their relationship to mucosal immunology, mechanisms of inflammation, the epithelial barrier in immunity, innate immunity, immunoglobulins and B-cell functions, mucosal vaccines, and genetics. An additional 30 invited speakers will chair abstract-driven sessions on regulatory T cells, the immunology of the epithelium, vaccines and mucosal infections, dendritic cells, cytokines, urogenital immunology, pulmonary immunology, inflammation, allergy, inflammatory bowel disease, celiac disease, lymphocyte homing, cytokines and chemokines, inflammation, mucosal antibodies, ocular and upper-airway mucosal immunology, innate immunity, and antimicrobial defenses.

Another feature of the meeting will be the presentation of our Lifetime Achievement Awards. In 2007 these were awarded to Jan Holmgren (Sweden) and Jerry McGhee (United States).

Recognizing the important international nature of our Society, the SMI continues to work vigorously with its sister societies in Europe (the European Mucosal Immunology Group) and Japan (the Japanese Society of Mucosal Immunology). Through the years, there has been vigorous interaction between the SMI and these sister societies to foster the planning of regional meetings and the development of young investigators, who

continue to enter the field at an increasing rate. The Society aims to build these relationships in a much broader fashion in the coming years and to help to promote mucosal immunology in developing regions of the world, such as much of Asia, South and Central America, and Eastern Europe. Given the increasing number of individuals who are attending the ICMI each year, we are very hopeful that we will see increasing leadership from these emerging areas.

Finally, to enhance the functionality of the Society, we are pleased to report that, as of 1 September 2008, the SMI is under new professional management through its relationship with Association Acumen, based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This professional management firm has significant experience in the affairs of professional societies such as ours, including the Federation of Clinical Immunology Societies (FOCIS). Association Acumen, led by Gail Bast, a highly experienced administrator, has rapidly brought modern management techniques to our Society, including web-based membership management that interfaces with Nature Publishing Group and that will allow individuals to access and update their membership information at their convenience. These exciting new features, which take place largely behind the scenes, are essential to our productivity and ability to link to all our members in the most user-friendly manner. Under the leadership of Association Acumen, our ability to network and communicate both individually and communally has improved dramatically, and the more streamlined management of the SMI will allow more time to be spent on important scientific activities.

In summary, this has been an exciting year of change for the Society, during which time I have been pleased to serve as your President. I look forward to meeting you all at the 14th ICMI in Boston.

Richard S Blumberg, President, SMI

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