

Third isirv-Antiviral Group Conference

Influenza and Other Respiratory Virus Infections: Advances in Clinical Management

The third isirv-AVG conference was held in the Keio Hotel, Tokyo on 4th to 6th June 2014.

Repeated infections by influenza and other respiratory viruses contribute enormously to the burden of human disease across the age spectrum and to both healthcare costs and societal economic loss. Emergent zoonotic pathogens, as evidenced recently by lethal illness due to avian influenza H7N9 and H5N1 viruses and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus, pose a constant threat of causing global outbreaks. Despite extensive knowledge of the viruses, our armoury of specific vaccines and therapeutics to combat these continuing threats is limited. The conference focused on recent advances in understanding and mitigating the impact of respiratory virus infections, with a particular emphasis on clinical management.

The location of the conference reflected the extensive experience in Japan of, for example, previous universal influenza vaccination of school children and more recently the effective use of antivirals (and vaccines) in combatting seasonal and pandemic influenza, and the development of novel antiviral agents. Of the 190 clinicians, public health specialists and medical scientists from 34 countries, over a third were from Japan.

The programme included 6 plenary sessions, comprising presentations from 25 specialists, on: Emerging respiratory virus threats, including influenza H7N9 and H5N1, and MERS-CoV; Influenza impact and management; Advances in respiratory virus diagnosis and treatment; Antiviral resistance and new agents; Influenza vaccines; and a more general session on Respiratory virus infections, followed by a discussion panel on clinical management issues. Five special lectures included four lunch seminars on: Clinical effectiveness of neuraminidase inhibitors in Japan; The clinical and anti-influenza virus effects of Favipiravir, a novel anti-RNA virus, anti-influenza agent; Universal influenza vaccination program for school children was effective for protection of elderly and young children; Neuraminidase inhibitor therapeutic effect, drug resistance, viral transmission and shedding studies conducted by Niigata University; and an evening seminar on: Current progress in influenza research. Two sessions for oral contributions selected from submitted abstracts was complemented by 62 poster presentations on various themes.

Generous support of the conference included provision of thirteen travel scholarships to assist younger delegates to attend. An overview of the conference will be published in *Influenza and Other Respiratory Viruses*.