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isirv wishes you and your loved ones a happy and healthy holiday season!
The inaugural conference of the newly established Antiviral Group of the International Society for Influenza and other Respiratory Virus Diseases (isirv-AVG) was organised in conjunction with the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (FIOCRUZ) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 8th to 10th November. The purpose of the meeting was to increase awareness of the antivirals available for combating influenza and understanding of their efficacy and effectiveness in different situations, policies for use against pandemic and seasonal influenza, and the limitations posed by development of resistance.

The focus on Latin America was reflected in just under half of the 130 participants being from that region. Delegates were drawn from clinical, laboratory and policy backgrounds at national and international level. Organisations represented included national public health agencies and academic institutions from North and South America, Europe and Asia, and the WHO. The opening address was given by Dr Paulo Gadelha, President of FIOCRUZ, who explained the importance of the conference for Public Health and its timeliness in the aftermath of the 2009 pandemic and continued threat of H5N1.

A keynote lecture which introduced the context of antivirals, in relation to vaccines, in the control of influenza was followed by three symposium sessions in which a further eleven international experts provided a comprehensive review of the current state of the art and recent developments of newer antivirals, development of resistance and future perspectives on alternative antiviral strategies to combat influenza.

Six workshops provided a forum for more detailed discussion of particular aspects. These included national policies for use of antivirals and the challenges faced during the emergent 2009 pandemic, how policies were modified over the course of the pandemic and how difficulties in mobilising ‘pandemic’ stockpiles emphasised the importance of established practice in effective distribution of antivirals. With the currently circulating viruses resistant to the M2 inhibitors, amantadine and rimantadine, the meeting focussed on the neuraminidase inhibitors, with an emphasis on the emergence of resistance, particularly to oseltamivir. The importance of effective surveillance and monitoring of antiviral susceptibility, especially in relation to antiviral use, was stressed, and there was lively discussion of the relative merits of different assays for detection and
characterisation of resistance mutations, and of the in vivo consequences of reduced sensitivity of the neuraminidase in terms of clinical and epidemiological significance. Of particular concern in relation to the emergence and spread of oseltamivir-resistant seasonal H1N1 viruses during 2007-2008, is the apparent relative fitness of 2009 H1N1 pandemic viruses with a H275Y resistance mutation and, despite the generally low frequency of resistant variants, the possible wider spread of a recent cluster of such oseltamivir-resistant viruses in Australia.

Interactive demonstrations facilitated discussion of the use of a reference panel of resistant and sensitive viruses in susceptibility monitoring, of methods for IC<sub>50</sub> determination and statistical analyses of antiviral susceptibility data, and of databases for collation and sharing of phenotypic and genetic data. Information presented in the various sessions was also complemented by 25 poster presentations on various themes.

Discussion of recent developments included the relative merits of other recently approved neuraminidase inhibitors, peramivir and laninamivir, and of phase II/III clinical studies of the polymerase inhibitor favipiravir (T-705), but also stressed the need for more effective therapies for clinical management of influenza. Future perspectives included a review of other potential targets and the structural data now available to assist in the design of alternative antivirals. The meeting concluded on a very positive note with a presentation illustrating the efforts of numerous small pharmaceutical companies to develop novel antivirals against influenza.

A conference dinner at Rio Scenarium on the evening of the first day afforded delegates the opportunity to experience the delights of Brazilian cuisine and culture as well as to meet and interact. An informative excursion to the historic FIOCRUZ campus on the afternoon of the second day was particularly appreciated by many of the participants. Generous support of the conference allowed provision of travel grants to assist some twenty delegates to attend.

Following the close of the conference, the first annual meeting of the Antiviral Group was held to explain to the delegates, who became members by virtue of attending the conference, the objectives, development and structure of the group and role of the AVG committee, and ways in which members may participate in the activities and future development of the group.
Summary Report of the Joint ECDC/WHO Regional Office for Europe Meeting on Influenza Surveillance now Published

On 7-9 June 2011, the Slovenian Ministry of Health hosted the ECDC and WHO/Europe’s first joint influenza surveillance meeting. The objectives of the meeting were to review the 2010-2011 influenza season in the European region, to present the current recommendations for influenza surveillance and to address key issues related to virological and epidemiological influenza surveillance covering a wide variety of topics. The meeting report was recently published online and contains a summary of the main content of the workshop group sessions and the recommendations and next steps identified during the meeting.

To view the full report, please go to: http://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications/Publications/1112_MER_ECDC_WHO_Influenza_surveillance_meeting_Ljubljana.pdf

CDC Reports United States Influenza Vaccination Coverage for 2011-2012 Season

The CDC has released an updated report on vaccination coverage for the 2011-2012 season. The report includes national estimates of the proportion of people vaccinated by approximately November 6, 2011. One of the key findings from this report was that a majority of adults and children in the United States were still unvaccinated by this time point, but this finding was similar to the reported findings from the 2010-2011 season.

To read the full report, please go to: http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/vaccination/national-flu-survey.htm

Influenza Patients Receiving Statins may Have a Decreased Risk of Death

A recent study published in the Journal of Infectious Diseases found an association between influenza patients receiving cholesterol-lowering statins and decreased risk of death. The study involved 3043 patients hospitalized with laboratory-confirmed influenza. Of these patients, 33% received statins. In this study, it was observed that influenza patients not receiving statins had almost twice the risk of death as those who did receive the medication (adjusted odds ratio, 0.59 [95% CI, 0.38-0.92]).

To read the full report, please go to: http://jid.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2011/12/12/infdis.jir695.abstract
ESWI Announces Second European Flu Summit

ESWI recently announced that their upcoming European Flu Summit will be held in Brussels, Belgium on 21 May 2012. The goal of the meeting will be to provide an informal platform for exchanging good practices and to initiate concrete actions to improve public health protection against influenza. The meeting will be free for all attendees.

Information will be available at http://www.flusummit.org in the near future.

Options VIII Update

Options for the Control of Influenza VIII will be held in Cape Town, South Africa, 5-10 September 2013. The members of both the Scientific and Organizing Committees have now been chosen. Moving forward, isirv will work closely with these committees on a number of projects, including identifying workshop topics and Chairs for the upcoming meeting.

Please visit the Options VIII website at http://www.controlinfluenza.com for more information.


isirv Membership Application

First Name: ____________________________________________ Last Name: ____________________________________________

Current Position: ____________________________________________ Academic Title: ____________________________________________

Institution Name: ____________________________________________

Institution Type: ☐ Academic ☐ Industry ☐ Public Health ☐ Governmental

Industry: ____________________________________________ Department: ____________________________________________

Address 1: ____________________________________________

Address 2: ____________________________________________

City: ____________________________________________ State: ____________________________________________ Postal Code: ____________________________________________

Country: ____________________________________________

Phone: ____________________________________________ Fax: ____________________________________________

E-mail Address: ____________________________________________

Please indicate your five main areas of interest (rate from ‘1’ to ‘5’, with 5 as the highest score):

☐ Animal health/disease ☐ Human health/disease ☐ Zoonoses/ecology ☐ Pandemic preparedness ☐ Policy for control and prevention
☐ Cost benefit and health economics ☐ Diagnostics, epidemiology, and surveillance ☐ Vaccines ☐ Immunology ☐ Antivirals
☐ Viral structure & replication ☐ Other?: ____________________________________________

Which virus(es) are your main interest?

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The Society’s members will elect the officers of isirv.

If proposed, would you accept nomination for election? ____________________________________________

Please give any general suggestions you have on priorities for isirv activities for the first 1-2 years:

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New membership fee is 85 GBP (approximately 134 USD or 102 EUR, as of Dec 2011) payable by cheque or bank transfer to isirv account: Barclays Bank, Edgware Branch, 126 Station Road, Edgware, London, HA8 7RY. Sort code 20 29 41. Account #307 876 20. To register for isirv and pay online: visit www.isirv.org. Payment confirmation will be mailed to the address provided on the membership form.

If using a cheque please print and mail a copy of this form together with payment to:

isirv Organiser
22 Tiverton Road
LONDON NW10 3HL
United Kingdom

Make the cheque payable to isirv and write the member’s name legibly on the cheque. The amount of the cheque must match the annual membership fee.