

## Winter 2012 ISSUE

### Letter from ISACB President

David A. Vorp, Ph.D.



I am honored to be serving as the Society's eighth president (and first without an MD degree!). I look forward to a successful term of growth of and continued high-quality programming by the Society. I hope that you will be part of these efforts, as success of any society to fulfill its mission is a

direct result of a vibrant membership. **If you are not a member, please consider becoming one today.**

Shortly after the 2012 Olympic Games concluded, the ISACB held its thirteenth Biennial Meeting in London, England, hosted by Dr. George Hamilton and University College, London (UCL). Preceding the main meeting program, a one-day Satellite Meeting, hosted by the Royal Free London Hospital, was held, followed by the keynote lecture and welcoming reception. The excellent keynote lecture, entitled "*Micro Models of Cardiovascular Function*" was delivered by Kevin Kit Parker, Ph.D., the Tarr Family Professor of Bioengineering and Applied Physics, Wyss Institute for Biologically-Inspired Engineering, and Harvard Stem Cell Institute. The welcoming reception was held in the beautiful and historic Portico of UCL. The scientific sessions of the meeting were on such contemporary areas critically in need of increased investigation as: Molecular and Cardiovascular Imaging; Developmental Cardiovascular Biology in Children and Adults; Lifetime Management of Arterial Disease; Cell-Cell and Cell-Matrix Interactions in Cardiovascular Biology; Critical Issues in Tissue Engineering; Biomaterials in the Development of Small Diameter Vascular Conduits and Heart Valves; Emerging Medical Technologies in Cardiovascular Repair and Therapeutics - Proteomics and Epigenetics, and Inflammation; and Adaptive Immunity and Hypertension. There was a mix of invited internationally recognized experts, scientific presentations chosen from submitted abstracts, and a dedicated poster session. The Society awarded two Young Investigator Awards to two very

### In This Issue:

#### President's Column

#### Congratulations to ISACB's Young Investigators

#### ISACB Off-Year Meeting

#### Labor of Love

### Join Our Mailing List

## Letter to the Editor

**Editor:** Elena Aikawa, M.D., Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Medicine  
Harvard Medical School  
Director, Vascular Biology Program  
Center for Interdisciplinary  
Cardiovascular Sciences Brigham and  
Women's Hospital

Have an interesting article to share or meeting to promote in the eCirculator? Send an e-mail to Elena Aikawa ([eaikawa@partners.org](mailto:eaikawa@partners.org)) or [isacb1@aimbe.org](mailto:isacb1@aimbe.org).

#### **ISACB**

#### **c/o AIMBE**

1701 K Street NW, Suite 510  
Washington, District of Columbia 20006  
202-496-9660

deserving young colleagues (see announcement below), and we look forward to them being part of our Society and continuing to make a mark on our field. The ISACB's three-pronged mission is to "provide a forum for communicating issues related to the translation of innovative cardiovascular research from the laboratory to the bedside"; "uniquely nurture strong face-to-face communication ... among academic scientists, clinicians and industry-based scientists"; and "serve as a key forum for discussion of solutions to difficult clinical, scientific and technical challenges". It is safe to say that the 2012 Biennial ISACB Meeting fulfilled all three aspects of this mission.

The 2013 off-year meeting is being planned for Mauritius, a beautiful island in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Madagascar, and will be hosted by Gary Bowlin (see attached announcement). These meetings are typically limited to ISACB members and have been of extremely high quality, in terms of the science, networking, and venue. These are exciting times for ISACB as we continue to build on our rich history of bringing together clinicians, clinical-scientists, basic-scientists and engineers from academia and industry, all with a common interest in applied cardiovascular science. I hope you will be part of it and I hope to see you in Mauritius!

Sincerely,

David A. Vorp, Ph.D.  
ISACB President

## ARTICLES

### CONGRATULATIONS to the ISACB Young Investigators!

The awardees for the 12th Biennial Meeting of the ISACB were:

**Casey J. Holliday-Ankeny, Ph.D.**, from Robert Nerem's and Hanjoong Jo's laboratories at Georgia Institute of Technology and Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Casey's talk was entitled *"The Function of shear-responsive and side-dependent microRNA-486-5p in Aortic Valve Endothelium"*.

**Maxime Tondreau, Ph.D.**, from the Laboratoire D'Organogénèse Expériment (LOEX) Directed by François Auger at Laval University in Quebec, Canada. Maxime's talk was entitled *"A Novel Tissue-Engineered Devitalized Vascular Prosthesis"*.

**ISACB's 2013 Off-Year Meeting**  
Gary Bowlin, Ph.D., Off-Year Meeting Chair



The International Society for Applied Cardiovascular Biology (ISACB) 2013 biennial "Off-Year Conference" will be held August 7-9, 2013 in Flic en Flac, Mauritius at the La Pirogue Resort ([www.lapiroque.com](http://www.lapiroque.com)). This is the first of its kind in the Indian Ocean region. The format will follow that of the past series of meetings. The first evening will be a reception/poster session for attending students to allow them an opportunity to present their work and interact with the senior scientists attending early in the conference in the hopes that this will engage them and allow them to be active participants through the remainder of the conference. August 8 and 9 will be full day sessions with the session topics determined by those attending the meeting, thus exploiting the appropriate expertise and making the discussions germane to the available session chairs. Like all the regular ISACB meetings, the sessions will include state-of-the-art applied cardiovascular biology science accompanied by related and often under-discussed issues including scientific ethics, curriculum development, regulatory pathways and others over a two-day period. Formats will be highly informal and interactive, including debates, panel sessions, and others and will be intended to stimulate dialogue among academics, industry scientists, and clinicians. Historically, this meeting has been relatively small, but highly intimate and loaded with an expert group of participants from around the globe. We expect this trend to continue at the Mauritius meeting. The organizing committee also plans to have a conference dinner on the beach celebrating Mauritius cuisine and culture that will be included in the registration fee. We may also plan an optional group excursion (not included in registration fee) to explore the beauty and culture of the island on Saturday, August 10 for those who may be interested. The registration fee will be modest to cover the conference expenses such as conference materials and tea breaks. The standard room rate has been set at \$254 (double, 2 persons) and \$173 (single) and includes half board (incredible breakfast and dinner buffets). A limited number of superior rooms are available for those traveling with the family. The room rate also includes complimentary resort sports such as Kayaks, laser sails, glass-bottom boat trips, snorkeling, and windsurfing, fun boat, aqua gym classes, six

floodlit tennis courts, yoga classes, badminton, bocciball, and table tennis. Please feel free to share this information with your colleagues that may have interest in attending. We look forward to welcoming all to participate in a highly productive, yet enjoyable, conference. For more information regarding Mauritius and things to do, please visit [www.mauritius.net/index.php](http://www.mauritius.net/index.php).

You may notify Katie Goodman at [isacb1@aimbe.org](mailto:isacb1@aimbe.org) or Gary Bowlin at [glbowlin@vcu.edu](mailto:glbowlin@vcu.edu) with your interest to be included on future meeting correspondence. Please plan to arrange for travel and accommodations in early January or February 2013, due to the popularity of the resort and Mauritius at this time of the year.

## Labor of Love

Aggie Simionescu, Ph.D. and Dan Simionescu, Ph.D.



"Close to midnight, snow flurries dance around in the empty streets. We finish our enzyme assay in the lab and head out towards the campus dorms about 2 miles away. We were young and happy and slowly falling in love. Aggie and I met in the '80s, in college while pursuing biochemistry at the University of Bucharest." (Dan) By that time, biochemistry was a new and exciting field in the biology department, and only 25 students per year were admitted. We were both attracted to biochemistry because it showed promise to open numerous windows into the world of biology and medicine. As our college did not have enough labs and professors for all the chemistry and physics courses we had in our curriculum, we had to go to other colleges and institutes for classes and labs, some of them far from our own college. All this traveling along Bucharest streets and then the summer practices at very diverse places, from Research Centers in National Parks in the mountains to Research Institutes and to Hospital labs, made these 25 students to know each other very well and to be very close, and, among them, the two of us became very good friends. "First summer, when most of us went home to different cities, Dan asked me to let him come to my parents' home,



as he didn't want to spend the summer alone in Bucharest. I thought what my parents would say, that after leaving home for only one year, I bring someone with me. But my family liked him, and, one year later, we got married." (Aggie)

In college, we were prepared for doing research, and this was the other passion we shared ever since. "My inclination toward research was definitely influenced by my parents, Maya and Nicolae Simionescu, both renowned scientists, and by their friends and entourage at Yale and Columbia University. My wife's fondness for research also came from her parents; their way to see the world and the education they gave her made her want to find out more about the scientific world." (Dan) Still in college, we started to work in the lab, not once walking home after midnight. Working on a liver alkaline phosphatase assay set in motion our desire to know more and our passion for each other. "I also worked with Maya Simionescu in the nearby Institute for Cellular Biology and Pathology on surface properties of the lung alveolo-capillary barrier cells and used electron microscopy, discovering a world of miracles." (Dan)

After college, we embraced a more applied aspect of research at the Cardiovascular Research Center, in Targu Mures, where our boss, a well-known cardiovascular surgeon, Dr. Radu Deac, insufflated in us the passion for heart valves. What is behind the natural valve biology and pathology and why the valve bioprotheses degrade as well? These were questions that fascinated us, and the three of us made a very good team; brainstorming meetings, strenuous work, pure science going directly to the patients' bed; all of these gave us so much happiness, that we didn't feel the oppression of the communist world that made its presence felt outside the lab. Before the internet, with the little book of "Current Contents" received from the institute, we kept a connection with the scientific world and the flame of research burning in our hearts. "We were not allowed to attend conferences outside the country, but my father organized workshops at the Institute, which brought great names from all over the world. He also organized a Romanian Cell Biology Society, with yearly symposiums. They really were amazing, and we attended these, bringing with us our daughter at a very, very young age. No wonder she is now doing a PhD in cell biology/biochemistry".

Definitely enthusiasm is a key element in research, but not enough. Working with a limited amount of supplies was a continuous challenge in those times, and that did not improve in the '90s, when we all hoped for major changes. It was then that we decided to start all over again in the USA. Keeping our passion and interest for heart valves, but missing a connection with a hospital and access to human tissues, we started a Cardiovascular Tissue Engineering Laboratory in Clemson, SC, as tissue engineering was for us biochemists, just like coming home. Besides working in a new lab, we were also "exposed" to a new challenge: before, it used to be only the 2 of us in the lab, but now,

very quickly, our lab filled up with students, definitely a new and wonderful experience for us. We learned that it's such a joy to teach young minds and transmit them the knowledge, but, most of all, the passion for research.

We always studied the heart valves, blood vessels, and the heart, but now we realize that it's worth looking "inside the heart" as well. If love is there, then research is good; and for us, love was always there, for each other, for students, for work. We can end this story with our favorite quote by Blaise Pascal: "The heart has its reasons which Reason knows nothing of".

[Forward email](#)



This email was sent to isacb1@aimbe.org by [isacb1@aimbe.org](mailto:isacb1@aimbe.org) | [Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

ISACB | 1701 K Street NW | Suite 510 | Washington | DC | 20006