

Dear CSM members,

Spring has finally arrived, at least on the calendar, and with it the anticipation of a number of things such as final exams, more time to think about and carry out research, and of course, submitting your abstracts and nominations for the upcoming CSM Annual Conference and satellite symposium on "Environment Dimensions of Antibiotic Resistance".



2013 Annual Conference at Carleton University

The organizers of this year's conference and satellite symposium have lined up a great selection of invited speakers. Highlights will include keynote speakers Nevan Krogan from UCSF and Andrew Emili from U of T who will be sharing their perspectives on the merging of systems and structural biology approaches to understand biological processes using microbes as model organisms. The satellite symposium will be showcasing an impressive international cadre of researchers in the area of environmental impacts of antibiotic use and resistance.

CSM Members are encouraged to play several major roles in making this year's gathering a very successful one. Spread the word about the conference and preconference symposium within your institution and to your research colleagues (http://www.csm-scm.org/english/conf_upcoming.asp). Encourage postdocs and students to attend too as this meeting is highly supportive of young scientists. In addition to submitting abstracts and attending the meetings, everyone is encouraged to recognize the accomplishments of their students and peers by nominating candidates for one of the 3 major career achievement awards bestowed by the CSM.

The CSM Murray Award for Career Achievement is the Society's highest award for senior researchers. Named in honour of Professors R.G.E. Murray and E.G.D. Murray, two of Canada's most prominent Microbiologists, the award will be given in recognition of outstanding scientific achievements in microbiology.

The Fisher Scientific Award, given to meritorious new researchers, will highlight the recipient's early career achievements in microbiology. Those who completed their last degree during or after 2002 are eligible for nomination. It is especially important to encourage and support this group of researchers who are navigating successfully through a challenging period of their careers.

Last, but certainly not least, is the Armand-Frappier Outstanding Student Award/ /La bourse Armand-Frappier pour l'étudiant exceptionnel. Previously known as the Gold Student Award, this honour will be bestowed upon the 2013 Canadian Graduate Student Microbiologist of the Year as judged by the research accomplishments during the student's graduate program. I would encourage all CSM Faculty Representatives to consider submitting an application from your best graduate student.

The recipients of each of these awards will present their research findings at the Annual Conference. Nomination details, as well as a list of previous award recipients, are available on the CSM website for all of the above awards.

CSM Advocacy Roles

After participating in reviewing/revising the current draft of the Canadian Biosafety and Standards Guidelines via a regional meeting with CFIA/PHAC representatives in February and through my own university Biosafety Committee, it has become even more evident to me that microbiologists need to be involved with the revision of these guidelines. This will help to ensure that it is people actually working in labs subject to Biosafety rules who are involved in creating guidelines that not only result in a safe workplace, but are practical and do not excessively limit the ability to carry out great research. Yes, its time consuming and not terribly sexy but otherwise regulations can be unnecessarily escalated by well-meaning, but essentially bureaucratic decision-making.

Phase III of the development of the Human Pathogens and Toxins Act (HPTA) is directed at trying to identify any potential operational challenges to the implementation of the HPTA with respect to the following areas:

1. **Licensing**
2. Functions and qualifications of **Biosafety Officers**
3. **Inventory** requirements
4. The development of an **exposure reporting and prevention program**
5. **Security Requirements** for those working with Risk Group 3 or 4 human pathogens and certain toxins

This is a key opportunity for establishing the validity and feasibility of these evolving regulations. I will be attending a workshop in Toronto in early April and hope to see some of you there.

And by the way, if you want to see what a BSL4 facility looks like, including an overview of some of the operational challenges, check out the video <http://www.microbeworld.org/podcasts/microbeworld-video> that was posted with the ASM President's Newsletter showcasing the National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories (NEIDL) in Boston.

Graduate Training in the Current Fiscal Environment

Last letter, I asked how people were dealing with the challenges of appropriate graduate training and the fiscal pressures being placed on our graduate programs. I received quite a few responses from members who also lamented the state of affairs. I recently asked some colleagues from the EU to comment on the situation during a career info session with graduate students. The comments all centered on the need to "be" a great researcher rather than how to do this. I don't think we spend enough time articulating what we're doing or want to do with our graduate training! I think we need to be more proactive in recognizing and emphasizing that the skills learned in graduate school will

translate into many different career scenarios. Despite Canadian granting agencies' emphasis on training "Highly Qualified Personnel" (HQP), we still need to ask ourselves if we are preparing our students to be successful in the work environment as it exists today. I was pleased to learn of the organization of a forum by students/postdocs at the upcoming CSM where we will be able to discuss these issues and hear about the concerns of our trainees. This will take place just before the Student Mixer, which will be a great segue for continuing these discussions!

[In closing...](#)

Here's hoping that those of you who are gardeners (like myself) are soon able to dig in the dirt (despite our knowledge of the plethora of microbes that are clinging to us as a result) and that those who aren't gardeners find a comfy spot on the deck out of the wind and in the sunshine to enjoy the outdoors as well.

Regards, Nancy Martin