

The ICAV 6th International Symposium Avian Influenza and Public Health: Leads to Drugs to Markets Symposium Overview

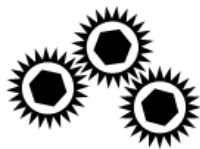
The ICAV 6th International Symposium took place from May 3 – 6, 2008 at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario and the MaRS Discovery Complex in downtown Toronto. The Symposium was attended by over 100 scientists and experts involved in anti-viral research and development from over 13 countries including Belgium, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Nigeria, Slovakia, Switzerland, UK, and the USA.

A welcoming reception on May 3rd at the Peterborough Canoe Museum was generously hosted by the Operitel Corporation. At the reception, ICAV's new SharePoint server—ICAVconnect—developed in partnership with Operitel, was unveiled and ICAV members were given the opportunity to register.

The Symposium covered three themes. For the scientific component, researchers from ICAV's international scientific network gathered on May 4th at Trent University's Gzowski College to discuss progress in the research and development of new anti-viral therapeutics. The scientists were welcomed by Dr. Roberta Bondar, Chancellor of Trent University. Dr. Nabil Seidah of the Institut de Recherches Cliniques de Montréal (IRCM) gave the keynote speech on the role of proprotein convertases and viral infection. The morning sessions focused on host and viral targets for influenza. In the afternoon, international perspectives on influenza were presented, including a keynote speech by Claude Müller on the spread and evolution of the H5N1 virus. The final session of the day focused on Dengue and other viruses. Dr. Janis Lazdins-Helds of WHO/TDR presented a speech on Dengue fever.

The Atrium of Gzowski College at Trent was beautifully transformed for the Symposium's Gala dinner, hosted by the Honourable Andy Mitchell on behalf of the Greater Peterborough Innovation Cluster. The dinner featured speeches by Peterborough municipal, provincial, and federal politicians and introduced members of the local community to ICAV scientists from around the world.

Dean Del Mastro, MP for Peterborough, and Bonnie Patterson, President of Trent University, welcomed members of the public and ICAV scientists to the public health day, the second full day of the symposium. Day two featured sessions on the threat of pandemic influenza and other emerging viral diseases and the need for both vaccines and anti-virals in effective pandemic preparedness strategies. Keynote speeches were given by Dr. Arlene King, Director General of the Centre for Immunization and Respiratory Infectious Diseases at the Public Health Agency of Canada, Professor Albert Osterhaus, Director of the Institute of Virology at Erasmus MC in The Netherlands, and by Professor Oyewale Tomori, Vice-Chancellor of Redeemers University,



Nigeria. Peter Singer, Director of the McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health gave a talk over lunch on life sciences in the developing world entitled “From Lab to Village.”

The African delegates present at the ICAV symposium participated in a roundtable event following the public health day. The discussion, moderated by Peter Singer, focused on research capacity building and how African scientists can further integrate into the ICAV scientific network. To start the event, a memorandum of understanding was signed by Bonnie Patterson, President of Trent University and Professor Oyewale Tomori, Vice-Chancellor of Redeemer’s University on behalf of their respective institutions.

The final day focused on the business of anti-virals. It was held at MaRS Discovery District in downtown Toronto and hosted by Grant Tippler of RBC Bank. Investors, private companies, and other interested parties were invited to join ICAV scientists to learn about the business of anti-virals. The morning session provided background on the business, science, and demand for new anti-viral therapies. Donald Low, Microbiologist-in-Chief at Mt. Sinai Hospital in Toronto, described the science behind anti-viral drugs. Brian McCarthy, a Senior Analyst for Merriman Curhan and Ford in New York presented the keynote address on the increasingly healthy market for anti-virals. The Ontario Minister for Research and Innovation John Wilkinson spoke about ICAV’s role in Ontario’s new strategy for innovation. The Minister was thanked by Pierre J. Jeannot, former President and CEO of Air Canada and Director-General Emeritus of IATA. Mr. Jeannot is now Chair of the Foundation on Anti-Virals (FAV), a new organization dedicated to philanthropically supporting the activities of ICAV.

In the afternoon, companies were invited to present their anti-viral pipelines. Presenters included Michel Bazinet of REPLICor Inc., Eric Stephen of Defence R&D Canada (DRDC), and Anne Marie Hayes of Roche Canada. The conference concluded with a panel chaired by Patrick Michaud, Chair of the ICAV Board, on the prospective business impact of novel anti-virals. Delegates were invited to attend an evening reception organized by BioFinance at the Hockey Hall of Fame.

During the Symposium, ICAV held a meeting of the International Steering Committee and the International Scientific Advisory Board. ICAV also hosted a session on HIV that brought together ICAV scientists working in this area to discuss collaboration and funding opportunities.

ICAV would like to thank its sponsors, the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Operitel Corporation, RBC Bank, The Greater Peterborough Innovation Cluster, BioFinance, and the Biotechnology Initiative, in addition to all speakers and delegates.

The next ICAV Conference will be hosted by the Institute of Microbiology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing, China in late October/early November 2008.