Despite my disbelief, the end of 2014 is upon us! Through the haze of end of year parties I hope all members are reflecting on a successful, exciting and rewarding 2014 and I wish you all happy holidays and a safe start to 2015. Congratulations to all those members who had success in the latest ARC and NHMRC funding rounds and best of luck to those preparing to throw their hat in the ring next year.

For this issue Professor Roy Robins-Browne agreed to participate in our first researcher profile story providing an insight into his illustrious career. I have also collated news from our state branches and again we have a great list of diverse new publications from our SIG members. I hope you enjoy the read and a big thank you to those who contributed to this edition. I again would like to encourage you all to participate in the development of this quarterly newsletter by submitting publications, awards, news and research stories to me at: hnewton@unimelb.edu.au

Happy Holidays,
Hayley Newton
Chair, Molecular Microbiology Special Interest Group, ASM
Melbourne Children’s Research Institute, Infectious Disease and Immunology, University of Melbourne, Melbourne 1999

Melbourne Children’s Hospital, University of Melbourne, Microbiological Research, Royal Professor/Director of 1996

Melbourne University of Melbourne, Immunology and Paediatrics, Departments of Microbiology and Associate/Prof 1996

Melbourne University of Melbourne, Microbiology and Paediatrics, Professor, Departments of 1991

Baltimore of Maryland School of Medicine, Professor of Medicine, University 1986

Melbourne University of Melbourne, Microbiology and Immunology, Professor, Department of 1982

Durban Microbiology, University of Natal, Head of the Department of 1980

University of Natal, African Institute for Medical Pathology and Research, Johannesburg 1979

University of Johannesburg, Lecturer, South African Institute for Medical Research, Johannesburg 1976

University of Witwaterstrand and the South African Institute for Medical Research, Johannesburg 1972

Career Timeline

Melbourne Children’s Research Institute, Infectious Disease and Immunology, University of Melbourne, Melbourne 1999

Melbourne Children’s Hospital, University of Melbourne, Microbiological Research, Royal Professor/Director of 1996

Melbourne University of Melbourne, Immunology and Paediatrics, Departments of Microbiology and Associate/Prof 1996

Melbourne University of Melbourne, Microbiology and Paediatrics, Professor, Departments of 1991

Baltimore of Maryland School of Medicine, Professor of Medicine, University 1986

Melbourne University of Melbourne, Microbiology and Immunology, Professor, Department of 1982

Durban Microbiology, University of Natal, Head of the Department of 1980

University of Natal, African Institute for Medical Pathology and Research, Johannesburg 1979

University of Johannesburg, Lecturer, South African Institute for Medical Research, Johannesburg 1976

University of Witwaterstrand and the South African Institute for Medical Research, Johannesburg 1972

Researcher Profile: Professor Roy Robins-Browne

Prof Robins-Browne is one of Australia’s most esteemed microbiologists who has taught, supervised and mentored many molecular microbiologists who have passed through the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Melbourne. Throughout his career, Prof Robins-Browne has made major contributions to microbiology and understanding the pathogenesis of bacterial infections, especially those causing diarrhoea in children in less-developed countries. The most recent addition to his long list of awards was the Rubbo Orator and Medalist at the 2014 Australian Society for Microbiology meeting in Melbourne. He took a moment out of his busy schedule to chat with me about his path of scientific discovery.

As a ten year old what did you want to “be when you grew up”? By the time I was 10, I’d given up on my dreams of becoming a fireman or engine driver, and thought that being a teacher or someone who studied nature would be nice. I thought the latter was called a naturist, but later discovered this was someone who doesn’t wear clothes.

What lured you into a research career in microbiology? Interesting question. I was training to be a pathologist. When I started I thought I’d be a generalist and train in all branches of pathology. So I started in micro simply because they had a vacancy at the time, and then switched to haematology. Part of my training involved some research, which I really enjoyed, so I enrolled for a PhD in haematology. Before I started, however, my proposed supervisor found another job. There was no suitable replacement, so I asked my former boss in micro if I could do a PhD with him. If he hadn’t said yes, I wouldn’t be answering this question now.

And what keeps you there? As scientists and academics we are incredibly privileged to receive public monies to test our pet theories. I value the freedom to plan and supervise my own program of work in areas that really interest me.

What scientific questions still drive you? My research focus at present involves suppressing virulence as a new approach to antibacterial chemotherapy. I’m interested in seeing if this can have clinical applications.

Who would you consider your significant scientific mentors? And what sort of advice/guidance did they provide for you? I have had numerous role models, both good and bad, who have influenced me, starting with some of my high school teachers. The most important lesson I learned from them was that anything worth doing is worth doing well. If you apply this philosophy to your research, you will trust your observations and not blame your tools for an unexpected result.

What advice would you give to early career researchers who wish to pursue a career in academia? Find a challenging problem that interests you. Then engage one or more senior colleagues whom you respect and admire to help you tackle it. In these collaborations, be prepared to give more than you take. It will pay off in the long run.

Have you got a favorite career moment that you would be happy to share? It’s not exactly “a moment”, but the best career move I made was to do a postdoc in the USA. It was a life-changing experience that led to friendships and collaborations that are still going strong more than 30 years later.
MiM2014 Microbiology in Maleny
Queensland Branch of the Australian Society for Microbiology

The QLD branch of the ASM had its annual scientific meeting: Microbiology in Maleny (MiM2014) – at The Tranquil Park Resort in Maleny on Saturday 29th of November. This meeting was a full day of scientific symposia with presentations from students, early career and senior researchers, covering a broad range of microbiological and infectious diseases topics. The Geoff Simmons Memorial Lecture: “Multi drug resistance and cross-resistance in bacteria of animal origin”, was presented by Prof. Corinna Kehrenberg from the University of Veterinary Medicine in Hannover, Germany.

In addition to the fabulous science that was presented, the meeting was also a great opportunity to interact with colleagues and the ASM QLD branch looks forward to seeing everyone at next years meeting.

Kate Seib (ASM QLD Branch Chair)

Victorian Branch: ASM BD Student Awards 2015

Calling all Victorian student members: ABSTRACTS NOW OPEN
It’s a great way to attend next year’s ASM Annual Scientific Meeting in Canberra (12-15 July 2015)

Where: Monash University, Clayton Campus

When: Tuesday 24th February 2015

Presentations: Competitors will deliver 12 minute presentations and receive 3 minutes of question time

Awards: Two major awards are available to help students attend the national ASM meeting. Winners will receive:

- ASM BD Award – conference registration, an airfare and $300 towards the cost of accommodation and is awarded to the best student presenting research carried out as part of a PhD or Masters by Research

- Victorian ASM Branch Award - conference registration and $200 towards the cost of an airfare and is awarded to the best student presenting research carried out as part of a Masters by Coursework or an Honours degree

Further details (including application forms and instructions) can be obtained by emailing: Karena Waller (klwaller@unimelb.edu.au)
Recent Publications by SIG Members


