

# ISPPD-6: Special Report



Photo courtesy of PneumoADIP

*Participants mingle at the ISPPD-6 welcome reception at the Reykjavik Art Museum*

THE 6TH INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON PNEUMOCOCCI AND PNEUMOCOCCAL DISEASES (ISPPD-6) was held this year from June 8–12 in Reykjavik, Iceland. The island's beautiful landscape and friendly locals hosted the world's leading experts in the field, with a total of 37 invited speakers, 43 oral presentations, 500 posters, and 980 participants from 86 countries and all continents. The symposium topics ranged from historical aspects of pneumococcal

"This is a very timely meeting. The field is in a state of flux. The conjugate vaccines work well, but the concept of a vaccine that transcends serotype is exciting. We are in a changing scenario."

– Dr. Farukh Khambaty, USA

disease to state-of-the-art advances in the field. Wyeth and GSK sponsored the event, along with PneumoADIP, Merck/MSD, Intercell AG, PATH, deCODE Genetics and Sanofi Pasteur. Exhibit booths were open throughout the week, displaying interactive videos, literature and media from GSK, Logaland ehf/Inverness Medical, Merck Sharp & Dome, PACE, PATH, PneumoADIP, Sabin Vaccine Institute, Statens Serum Institute, and Wyeth. Ingileif Jonsdottir, ISPPD-6 chair and scientific organizer, agreed that the conference was a huge success, stating: "It is wonderful to see the large number of participants from all over the world."

## **Progress has been enormous**

The magnitude and diversity of talks and the quality of data presented demonstrate the extent of progress made in the field of pneumococcal disease research. Improvements in our understanding of the global epidemiology and burden of disease were evident, and estimates of vaccine efficacy following PCV introduction in various regions of the world were encouraging. Advances in diagnostics and serotyping methods were reviewed, as well as improved patient treatment regimens and case management strategies. Trends in resistance were discussed, underlying the need to develop more effective strategies to address this problem from a variety of perspectives, including better patient care, continued surveillance, and improved policy and vaccine design. The Global Action Plan for Pneumonia (GAPP) was discussed, emphasizing the need for pneumonia prevention and control and moving the larger programmatic and clinical agenda forward.

"In general, the conference has been a success in terms of the response, the quality, and the quantity of the papers and presentations. People from all over the world are represented, including pharmaceutical industry, academia and even policy-makers. The number of participants has increased enormously since Alaska, showing that the science is increasing. In the future, we should think about introducing parallel sessions and more time to read papers."

– Dr. Brown Okoko, The Gambia

## **Defining the role of policy**

The critical and complex role of policy in an era of increasing resources and rapidly evolving tools was examined in depth. Speakers emphasized the need for improved implementation of disease control and prevention strategies, support for vaccine introduction and coverage at the national and international levels, and increased access to health care facilities, particularly in developing countries. "Science into Public Policy," a special session sponsored by PATH, PneumoADIP, Sabin Vaccine Institute and PACE, educated participants on effective advocacy strategy and invited participation in current evidence-based advocacy efforts to secure commitments to prevent pneumococcal disease. PACE members Dr. Cynthia Whitney and Dr. Samir Saha headlined the event, which drew more than 250 participants and resulted in a lively discussion about the value and importance of in-country advocacy

“The confluence of pneumococcal experts in the Northern Hemisphere represents the improvement of our understanding of the pathogen and the spectrum of diseases it causes. Very well-organized meeting. The eagerness and enthusiasm shown by the participants in their prompt attendance at 7 a.m. is a testimony to how much they all value this meeting. Keep up the great spirit of inquiry.”

– Dr. Mohan Ravuru, Belgium

in achieving pneumococcal disease prevention. Dr. Whitney encouraged professional society representatives attending ISPPD-6 to sign PACE’s Global Call to Action, which calls upon donors, governments, and leaders in health, science and industry to work together to achieve prevention. To date, nearly 50 professional medical societies have signed the Call to Action.

### Advances in basic science

The scientific presentations were wide ranging in subject area. Advances in our understanding of the immunologic basis for protection against pneumococcal disease and pathogenesis, as well as improvements in our understanding

“This year’s attendance at ISPPD-6 demonstrates the growing importance of pneumococcal disease on the global health agenda, and the inclusion of a focus on communicating our findings with policy-makers underscores the power we have to help achieve prevention in our own countries. I am encouraged that ISPPD will serve as a catalyst for change and help initiate progress toward prevention.”

– Dr. Samir Saha, Bangladesh

of the microbiology of pneumococcus, were examined. Progress in the development of a variety of tools in molecular epidemiology, microbial population dynamics and evolution, and modeling of transmission and population immunity were discussed. The influence of co-infections such as HIV, TB, influenza and other pathogens on pneumococcal disease pathogenesis was explored, and the need for efforts targeting minority populations with limited access to health care facilities was emphasized. Serotype distribution patterns, in particular the rise of 19A as an outcome of natural serotype fluctuation versus replacement disease, were extensively discussed, as were the implications for improved vaccine formulations. Wyeth, Merck and GSK sponsored three satellite symposia, where many of these topics were explored further.

“The number of different talks and posters is overwhelming and indicative of how important pneumococcal disease has become, as well as the heightened awareness surrounding this disease. I’m particularly struck by the progress that has been made in molecular techniques that will improve diagnostics with more sensitivity and specificity in the future.”

– Dr. David Goldblatt, UK

### Perspectives from participants

A topical conference survey provided by PneumoADIP explored participants’ views on issues related to pneumococcal vaccine development and introduction. Participants were rewarded with what became the most sought-after commodity at ISPPD-6, the pneumococcus stuffed toy, or the conference mascot. Survey results revealed that most attendees identified vaccine cost as the single biggest challenge to making vaccines available to children in devel-



*PATH’s Eileen Quinn and PACE members Dr. Samir Saha and Dr. Cynthia Whitney take questions during the **Science into Public Policy** panel on effective advocacy strategies*

oping countries. Other reasons included inadequate distribution networks for medicines, poor health care systems, lack of donor funding and excessive focus on treatment rather than prevention. Most participants indicated that an affordable cost per dose for PCV in developing countries would be less than \$1 USD. The majority of participants indicated that awareness is high, political will exists for prevention of childhood pneumonia and meningitis, and the medical community is the strongest advocate for childhood immunization in their countries.

### Awards, recognition and experiencing Iceland

Five young scientists from different geographical regions were awarded Robert Austrian Research Awards in Vaccinology, funded by an educational grant from Wyeth. Fifty travel grants funded by the ISPPD-6 Icelandic Organizing Committee, PneumoADIP and Wyeth were awarded, most of which were given to participants from developing countries. All participants received a conference souvenir, the ASM

"The conference has been a real success. To see countries from all over the world represented here shows the interest of the scientific community towards pneumococcal disease. It would be nice to see more African and Asian country representatives in the future and the assistance of the WHO, UNICEF and API managers as they are important for implementation of vaccines, and this would broaden the vision of the meeting."

– Dr. Kalala Michel Nyembwe, DRC

published *Pneumococcal Vaccines: The Impact of Conjugate Vaccines*, funded by an educational grant from Wyeth. Special recognition must be given to the ISPPD-6 advisory board, scientific and organizing committees, and the company organizing the conference, Congress Reykjavik, for an impeccable job.

Despite the hectic conference schedule, there was time to relax and explore the sights and sounds of Reykjavik and participate in an excursion to neighboring Thingvellir National Park and the luxurious Blue Lagoon Spa. In an eagerly

awaited soccer match—a conference tradition—the Icelandic host team, Icelandic Pneumococci and Their Clones, victoriously secured the Sputum Cup, defeating their World Team opponents 8–2.

### Looking toward the future

The symposium adjourned after a week of dynamic scientific exchange. While underlining the tremendous advances made in the field of pneumococcal disease research, the conference topics emphasized the need for enhanced efforts, further collaboration, increased advocacy and continued scientific research at a heightened magnitude and with a multidisciplinary approach. With the rapid strides achieved in the field thus far, one can only imagine the pace of progress to ensue within the next year, as current participants return, novel investigators join and we embrace a revised agenda. With renewed energy, we look forward to the upcoming year and all the advances it holds for pneumococcal disease research and policy. We welcome you to join us again at ISPPD-7, March 14-18, 2010 in Tel Aviv, Israel. For more information, visit <http://www2.kenes.com/ISPPD/Pages/Home.aspx>.

**Additional information, including a program and abstract book, is available at: [www.congress.in/ISPPD-6/](http://www.congress.in/ISPPD-6/).**

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