

## Report from ASM 2014: Solving the Puzzles



**Enzo Palombo**  
Melbourne 2014 LOC Chair

The recent ASM 2014 Annual Scientific Meeting and Exhibition was a wonderful event that attracted almost 700 delegates from across Australia and the world over four days (6–9 July) at the Pullman Albert Park. The venue provided an intimate environment which was conducive to networking, socialising and greater interaction between all delegates.

The meeting theme was ‘Solving the Puzzles’, which reflected the ever-increasing need for collaboration across the diverse areas of microbiology and other disciplines to address the microbiological issues facing our society. Indeed, the general atmosphere of the meeting showed how much microbiologists enjoy working and socialising together!

The meeting brought together international leaders complemented by the best of the local microbiology community. The inaugural pre-

conference EduCon meeting, modelled after the American ASM Annual Educators Conference (ASMCUE), was an outstanding success. Topics explored included inquiry-orientated learning, employer expectations of graduates, innovations in the teaching lab and microbiology curricula. The workshop program was held on the weekend and was well supported by delegates. The conference kicked off on Sunday afternoon with an incredibly stimulating, engaging and informative public lecture delivered by Sir Gustav Nossal on the topic of vaccination. The Bazeley Oration (Linfa Wang) and the Fenner Lecture (Ben Howden) set the standard for quality presentations for the remainder of the meeting and no-one was disappointed. The poster sessions (held every evening) gave every delegate plenty to see while enjoying refreshments which were appreciated following days of busy schedules. A new initiative launched this year was the Nancy Millis Mentoring Program designed for our student members. A number of networking and social events were organised and the response by students was well above our expectations with more than 50 postgraduate students taking part in the program.

The scientific program contained many highlights, especially with the calibre of international invited speakers who were able to attend. Not only were their plenary and symposium talks motivating and thought-provoking, the speakers engaged with other delegates and were available to share a coffee and a chat. For those who are avid listeners to Vincent Racaniello’s podcasts, look out for special ASM



ASM2014 Local Organising Committee. Back row: Rob Moore, Tony Marshall, Libby Grabsch, Priscilla Johanesen, Jacob Amy, Estee Madaschi, Danilla Grando, Dena Lyras, Narelle Fegan, Enzo Palombo. Front row: Catherine Butler, Mary Valcanis, Karena Waller, Christine Seers, Helen Stefanatos. Absent: Susan Cornish, Carl Kirkwood, John Boyce.

2014 editions (TWiM #84: Microbiology Down Under, TWiV #293: Virology Down Under and TWiV #296: The real Batman, Linfa Wang). The Rubbo Oration delivered this year by Roy Robins-Browne was a fitting tribute to a much loved and admired Melbourne microbiologist.

I wish to express my gratitude to the extremely hard-working and dedicated members of the Local Organising Committee and Scientific Committee. You should all be proud of your achievements in bringing ASM 2014 together. Thank you also the ASN Events team whose great work in the background meant that everything went smoothly and efficiently at the meeting.

We now look forward to Canberra in 2015!

## New Fellows of the Australian Society for Microbiology



New Fellows of ASM were presented with their certificates: Steven Giglio, Healthscope Pathology; Karena Waller, University of Melbourne, Yogitha Srikhanta, University of Melbourne, Kate Sieb, Griffith University with Paul Young (centre).

## Burnet Hayes Postgraduate Award: Erica Kintz

Erica Kintz is a Postdoctoral research associate at the Centre for Immunology and Infection, University of York. The Burnet Hayes Postgraduate Award enabled her participation at the ASM2014. She presented her work entitled 'Addition of glucose to O antigen subunit by glycosyltransferase operons of *Salmonella Typhi* results in increased serum survival'.



## David White Excellence in Teaching Award: Priscilla Johansen



Priscilla Johansen and Paul Young.

Priscilla works in the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences at Monash University as a Lecturer. She began teaching as a practical demonstrator in second and third year undergraduate Microbiology units whilst undertaking her PhD at Monash University. In her career to date she has taught various facets of Microbiology in different degree programs including Biomedical Sciences, Science and Medicine (undergraduate and graduate entry).

## bioMérieux ASM Identifying Resistance Award: Denis Spelman

Denis Spelman is an Infectious Diseases Physician and Medical Microbiologist. He is currently the Deputy Director of the Clinical Infectious Diseases Unit and Head of the Microbiology Department. He is the Head of the Spleen Registry and has an interest in infection control, multi-resistant organisms and their management.



Denis Spelman, Helen Stefanatos (bioMérieux) and Paul Young.



## ASM Frank Fenner Award: Ben Howden

Linfa Wang presented the 2014 ASM Frank Fenner Award to Professor Benjamin Howden. Ben is the recently appointed Director of the Microbiological Diagnostic Unit in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Melbourne, within the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity. He is also an Infectious Diseases Physician at Austin Hospital. His research interests have been driven by working in the hospital system where antibiotic resistant pathogens such as methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* and vancomycin-resistant Enterococci are a major problem. During his doctoral studies at Monash University (2004–2008) he used emerging genomic technologies to explore the molecular determinants of reduced vancomycin susceptibility in *S. aureus*. His current research activities include the application of genomics to understand the emergence, spread and pathogenesis of antimicrobial resistance bacterial pathogens; understanding the mechanisms and impacts of antimicrobial resistance, microbial adaptation, and changes in host-pathogen interactions during persistent *S. aureus* infection; and exploring the role of non-coding (small) RNAs in the *S. aureus* response to antimicrobials. His research is funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australia, and he is and NHMRC Career Development Fellow.



Ben Howden and Linfa Wang.

## BD ASM Student Travel Awardees

The BD ASM Student Travel Awards were presented by Estee Madaschi (Product Specialist, BD), and Michael Wawrzyniak (Clinical Sales Manager, BD) in a session chaired by Cheryl Power.

The **BD ASM Student Travel Awardees** and their presentations are:

### New South Wales

**Robert Moran**, University of Sydney.

Bowel movement: resistance plasmid transfer in the gut.

### Victoria

**Danielle Ingle**, University of Melbourne.

Phylogeny and virulence of atypical enteropathogenic *Escherichia coli*.

### Queensland

**Ashleigh Shannon**, University of Queensland.

Defining interactions between the dengue virus NS3 protease and its cofactor NS2B by site-directed mutagenesis.

### South Australia and Northern Territory

**Evan McRobb**, Menzies School of Health.

Identification, characterisation and treatment of *B. pseudomallei* in bore water supplies associated with melioidosis cases in northern Australia.

### Tasmania

**Kamarul Zaman Zarkasi**, Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture.

Pyrosequencing-based characterisation of the gastrointestinal microbiota of commercially farmed Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar* L.) in south-eastern Tasmania.

### Western Australia

**Amir Ariff**, University of Western Australia.

Whole genome sequencing and bacteriophages of *Moraxella catarrhalis*.



Estee Madaschi, Robert Moran, Danielle Ingle, Ashleigh Shannon, Cheryl Power Evan McRobb,; Kamarul Zaman Zarkasi, Amir Shariff, Michael Wawrzyniak.

## ASM Student Poster Prize award winners

Jacqueline Heath, The University of Melbourne: 'PG1058 in the Type IX Secretion System of *Porphyromonas gingivalis*'.

Carla Giles, University of South Australia: 'Development of an adenoviral rector vaccines for *Rhodococcus equi* infections in foals'.







