

EDITOR'S CORNER

The Seventh International Congress on Rapid Methods and Automation in Microbiology and Immunology. September 12-16, 1993. London.

London, a lovely place of great tradition, historical elegance, fine food, lively shops, and the site of the Seventh Congress of this successful and colorful symposium series. On this the 21st year of the existence of the "Rapid Methods Movement" the group of loyal applied microbiologists congregated at Imperial College, near the heart of London, for three days of intensive discussions and exchange of ideas and information on new discoveries, improvement of existing technologies, and breakthroughs in all aspects of rapid methods.

About 600 scientists from more than 30 countries attended the meeting. The three days were full of plenary sessions, poster sessions and oral presentations on a variety of topics cutting across the entire gamut of applied microbiology and immunology.

One of the recurring topics of the Congress was Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) technology. Many sessions were centered around this topic. The outcome of the discussion was that PCR technology is indeed impressive but not the answer to all the problems in applied microbiology. Some old fashioned microbiological approaches are still needed to solve some of the urgent problems of isolation, detection, characterization, and identification of microorganisms and their metabolites. For example, stimulation of growth of pathogens by ingenious methods by manipulation of various components in the primary isolation media, mechanization to handle large numbers of sample tubes to detect reactions, etc. are still needed.

One impressive part of the Congress was the exhibits. This was the largest concentration of new and automated instruments, kits, systems, and equipment on rapid methods assembled in one location solely for the purpose of rapid methods and automation in microbiology. The relatively small number of people made interactions personal and meaningful.

Surrounding the Congress site are fantastic Museums of History, Science, Arts, and Architecture. It is difficult not to play truant and visit these great museums during the Congress. In addition, the organizers arranged a wonderful opening reception in the Royal College of Music, a unique buffet dinner in the Science Museum with airplanes and engines hovering all over the place, and a truly memorable piano recital program in the beautiful compounds of Leighton House. We all absorbed a lot of culture along with good science.

One interesting discussion was on the possible formation of a Society of Rapid Methods and Automation in Microbiology. Maybe it is time to actively pursue this possibility and allow the formal formation of a Society at the 8th Congress scheduled to be held in Italy.

Dr. G.W.B. Newsom, the organizer of the 7th Congress, looked around nostalgically and commented to the Editor, "There are only a few faces from those youthful days of the First Symposium held in Stockholm in 1973." Yes, my friends, 21 years is indeed a long time to be involved with one symposium series. The Editor and Dr. Newsom truly grew up with the "Rapid Movement" and we hope many more Congresses will be held in the future around the globe. See you in Italy in 1996.

DANIEL Y.C. FUNG
EDITOR