Newsletter

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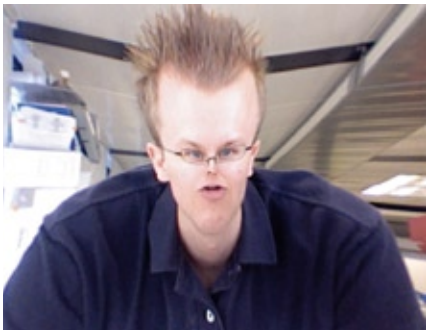
NEWS

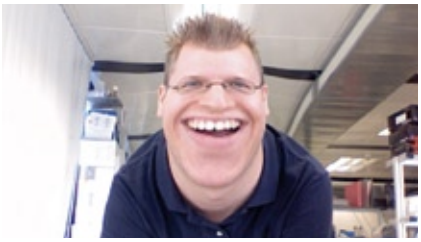
PhD student receives Boehringer Ingelheim Fonds Scholarship

Dirk Baumjohann, PhD student in the group of Dr. Federica Sallusto, has been awarded a prestigious PhD Scholarship by the Boehringer Ingelheim Fonds (BIF), Germany.

Dirk Baumjohann

The BIF pays particular attention to the promotion of junior scientists: through travel allowances it assists PhD students and post-doctoral scientists spending short-term practicals or participating in scientific courses. Three times a year, the Foundation awards approximately 15 long-term PhD scholarships focusing on basic research. The BIF PhD scholarships are granted for at least two years and can be extended for an additional twelve months. The BIF has gained an excellent reputation for spotting gifted young scientists. The purpose of the Foundation is the exclusive and direct promotion of basic research in biomedicine. Projects aim to experimentally elucidate the basic phenomena of human life. Botanical and prokaryotic investigations are supported only if they are of general biological importance.





In his project, Dirk aims at establishing an experimental system to study in vivo the requirements for induction of T cell-dependent B cell responses and for maintenance of memory B cells and serum antibody levels. The results obtained by his studies will increase our understanding of the regulation of adaptive immune responses and may lead to the development of more effective vaccines and therapies.

For more info on the Boehringer Ingelheim Fonds visit: www.bifonds.de

Post Doc from Down Under

Janine Stubbs has joined the lab of Antonio Lanzavecchia.

Janine Stubbs graduated with a Bachelor of Science from the University of Tasmania and received a scholarship to the Australian National University where she completed her Honours degree on the molecular mechanisms of nervous system development of the wallaby, Macropus eugenii. Janine then under-took a studentship in the laboratory of Prof. Barry Dickson at the Institute for Molecular Pathology, Vienna, Austria, on the genetic mapping of genes involved in Drosophila nervous system development.

A studentship in the lab of Prof. Ivo Pavlik at the Institute of Vetinary Medicine, Brno, Czech Republic, on the isotyping of Mycobacterium avium stimulated her interest in infectious disease. Janine completed her PhD under the supervision of Prof. Alan Cowman at the Walter and Eliza Hall of Medical Research in Melbourne, Australia, on the molecular mechanisms of invasion of human erythrocytes by the malaria parasite, Plasmodium falciparum. Erythrocyte invasion involves the interaction between erythrocyte receptors and parasite ligands. Ligands on the parasite surface are likely targets of natural immunity and represent good candidates for formulation into a subunit vaccine. It has long been appreciated that P.falciparum exploits multiple ligand receptor interactions for erythrocyte invasion that are functionally redundant.

Janine Stubbs, discusses with Nadia Bernasconi and Professor Lanzavecchia

In her PhD, Janine demonstrated with the genetic knockout of the parasite invasion gene PfRh4 that expression of this parasite ligand is essential for invasion in the absence of sialic acid-dependent mechanisms of invasion. It was found that the transcriptional regulation of this gene determines the ability of P.falciparum to interact with sialic acid-independent receptors, suggesting that gene silencing of parasite invasion ligands may be important for immune evasion.

The identification of invasion ligands and methods by which malaria parasites escape immune detection are essential for the rational development of effective vaccines against malaria. Her work was published in Science and collaborative efforts to characterise the immune response to PfRh4 in individuals living in malaria endemic regions have been submitted for publication.

Prior to arriving in Bellinzona, Janine was involved in a Legionnaires' disease case-control study with Dr Damon Eisen at the Royal Melbourne Hospital correlating functional levels of mannose-binding lectin in human serum with disease susceptibility (submitted).

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Swiss Science and Technology Office visit the IRB

The IRB receives funding from the Swiss Confederation based on article 16 of the Law on Research that regulates granting public funds to private institutes. As part of the request for increased support for the next funding period (2008-2011), the IRB welcomed the Swiss Science and Technology Office for an inspection on the 28th of August.

The Swiss Science and Technology Council, SSTC, is the consultative body of the Federal Council in all matters dealing with science policy. As a spokesman for the scientific community, the SSTC formulates recommendations for the Federal Council and suggests appropriate measures to carry them out. It also comments, at its own initiative or on behalf of the Federal Council, the DHA and the DEA, on specific projects and problems. The SSTC works with two associated study centres, the CEST and TA-SWISS, in developing and reviewing the basics of a national science policy.

The SSTC is made up of key people from the education, research and innovation sectors who have been nominated by the Federal Council. The president of the council is Prof. Dr. Med. Susanne Suter who led the delegation to the IRB with Dr. Max Salm, Scientific Advisor.

Prof. Dr. Susanne Suter

Dr. Max Salm

After a presentation of the institue by Professor Giorgio Noseda and Professor Antonio Lanzavecchia, the two most recent Group Leaders, Professor Jeremy Luban and Professor Marcus Manz gave presentations of their ongoing research programs.
The initial feedback of the inspection was extremely positive. The SSTC will prepare it's recommendation in the coming weeks.

For more info: www.swtr.ch/e/index.html

The IRB was pleased to host a meeting of Agroscope Changins-Wädenswil research centres

Agroscope Changins-Wädenswil ACW is one of three public agricultural research institutes, which are gathered under the name Agroscope. Part of the Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG) ACW prepares the technical and scientific bases for an efficient, sustainable and competitive agriculture. Areas of study include field crops, pastures, viticulture, arboriculture, horticulture, berries and aromatic and medicinal herbs.

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Jean-Philippe Mayor

Close to the IRB, in Cadenazzo is a section of the ACW dedicated to Cultures of the South Alps. Following the meeting, the IRB was presented with a sample of the wines produced at the ACW for "further study".

For more info: www.acw.admin.ch/

EVENT CALENDAR

Thursday, August 24th, 2006
Amanda Proudfoot, PhD
SPRI, Serono International SA, Geneva, Switzerland
At 12: 00 The chemokine system: multi-faceted therapeutic targets.
Host: Mariagrazia Uguccioni, MD

Monday, August 28th, 2006
Official Visit of the Swiss Science and Technology Council
IRB, Institute for Research in Biomedicine

Tuesday, September 12th, 2006
Claudia Lengerke, MD
Postdoctoral fellow G. Daley Lab,
Children's Hospital Boston
At 12: 00 Patterning hematopoiesis in embryonic stem cells.
Host: Markus Manz, MD

2nd - 4th of October, 2006
INNOCHEM meeting
IRB, Institute for Research in Biomedicine

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