



Luca Varani graduated in chemistry at the University of Milan (Italy) with a thesis in structural biology. He then moved to the MRC-Laboratory of Molecular Biology, obtaining a PhD degree at the University of Cambridge (UK) in 2000. His PhD research focused on the role of RNA and protein interactions in regulation of gene expression at the post-transcriptional level, culminating

in the determination of the largest NMR structure and one of only 3 RNA-protein complexes available at the time. He also contributed to show the role of RNA structure in dementia, proving the viability of RNA as a therapeutic target.

After a brief spell in Florence, he moved to Stanford University (USA) as a postdoctoral fellow, being awarded an “EMBO Fellow” in 2003. At Stanford he completed the first NMR study on TCR-pMHC complexes, proposing a novel approach to the systematic characterization of protein-protein interactions.

Confocal Microscope Arrives



Three large wooden boxes with the famous Leica logo were parked in the entrance to the IRB waiting for the technicians to come and assemble them into the cutting edge Confocal Microscope made possible through the generosity of an individual donor and a grant from the Swiss National Fund. In the coming months Leica will begin instructing IRB personnel in the use of this highly sophisticated instrument which joins the recently installed BD imaging system in the basement of the IRB to enable new horizons for IRB researchers.



IRB Scientific Advisory Board Meets

The Scientific Advisory Board of the IRB is charged with making recommendations to the Foundation regarding the scientific strategy of the institute and to help define the structure best suited to achieving that strategy and verifies the scientific quality of the research at the IRB.

The current members of the Scientific Advisory Board are:

- Adriano Aguzzi, University Hospital Zurich
- Hans Hengartner, University Hospital Zurich
- Alberto Mantovani, University of Milan
- Anne O'Garra, The National Institute for Medical Research
- Jürg Tschopp, University of Lausanne

In their recent meeting on the 8th of October the SAB interviewed the group leaders and discussed the strategy of the institute with the Director, Antonio Lanzavecchia.

Their report gave high marks to the IRB for the progress achieved in a short time with limited resources, and endorsed the strategy of the Director.

Nature Immunology Publication for Markus Manz

The October issue of Nature Immunology includes an article from the lab of Markus Manz on the Identification of clonogenic common Flt3+M-CSFR+ plasmacytoid and conventional dendritic cell progenitors in mouse bone marrow.

Lymphoid tissue plasmacytoid and conventional dendritic cells (DCs) are continuously regenerated from hematopoietic stem cells. The cytokine dependence and biology of plasmacytoid and conventional DCs suggest that regeneration might proceed through common DC-restricted developmental intermediates. By selecting for cytokine receptor expression relevant to DC development, we identify here highly cycling Lin⁻c-Kit^{int}Flt3⁺M-CSFR⁺ cells with a distinct gene-expression profile in mouse bone marrow that, on a clonal level in vitro and as a population both in vitro and in vivo, efficiently generated plasmacytoid and conventional DCs but no other lineages, which increased in number after in vivo injection of the cytokine Flt3 ligand. These clonogenic common DC progenitors thus define a cytokine-regulated DC developmental pathway that ensures the supply of various DC populations.



Balerna Middle School Visits

More than 50 middle school students visited the IRB recently. The group, comprised of four classes, learned about the function of Chemokines from Mariagrazia Uguccioni and visited the institute.



First Meeting of the IRB Executive Committee

The Foundation Board of the IRB is the governing body of the Institute and has instated an Executive Committee to streamline executive decisions. Members of this committee are Giorgio Nosedà, Paolo Agustoni, Sandro Rusconi, Carlo Maggini and Alberto Togni. The Executive Committee held its first meeting on the 23rd of October.