



REPORT OF ACTIVITIES 2014-2015

MISSION

The mission of ALAI is the improvement of education, training, and collaborative experimental and clinical research in human and veterinary immunology in our region, through the sponsorship of Courses, Workshops, and Meetings, and our triennial Latin American Immunology Congresses.

OBJECTIVES

- To promote close contact and cooperation between Latin American Immunology Societies.
- To facilitate the exchange of scientific information and the relationships among Latin American immunologists.
- To encourage, sponsor and participate in joint meetings between the Latin American Immunology Societies.

2014-2015 ACTIVITIES

IMMUNOCOLOMBIA2015

The main activities of ALAI during the 2014-2015 were concerned with the preparation of the 11th Latin American Congress of Immunology –IMMUNOCOLOMBIA2015- to be held at the Centro de Convenciones Plaza Mayor, Medellín, Colombia. October 13-16th, 2015.

These activities can be divided into:

1- Scientific Program.

The final program was structured with the enthusiastic participation of delegates from all ALAI's Societies plus a delegate from Venezuela. The program includes an opening ceremony with a lecture by Richard Flavell (Yale University, USA), 6 plenary lectures by world recognized immunologists covering selected cutting-edge topics, 29 symposia on the main areas of immunology, 2 panels, 1 round table and a closing lecture by IUIS President Jorge Kalil (University of Sao Paulo, Brazil), besides the sessions of oral and posters presentations. Plenaries and symposia speakers are members of the IUIS Executive Committee, other IUIS Committees, and expert immunologists from Latin American and abroad actively working in the main areas of Immunology (SEE ATTACHED PROGRAM). The call for abstracts was open in February 1st. and closed on May 31st. A total of 422 abstracts were received and 391 were accepted (96 for oral and 295 for poster presentation) covering all areas of basic and clinical immunology (SEE ATTACHED

INFORMATION ON AREAS AND PROCEDURE OF ABSTRACTS). Abstracts will be published in *Frontiers of Immunology*. In addition, we are working with Prof Kendall Smith, Editor-in-chief of *Frontiers of Immunology*, to publish full manuscripts of the symposia lectures and abstract in the format of Research Topics, and the symposia chairs have been invited to be Invited Editors of their respective symposia.

2- Course on “Immune regulation in Health and Disease”.

This pre-congress event will be held at the Sede de Investigación Universitaria, Universidad de Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia, October 10-13th, 2015. The topic of the course was decided after consultation with ALAI’s Scientific Committee and organized in close collaboration with Michelle Letarte, chair of the IUIS Educational Committee (SEE ATTACHED PROGRAM). The Faculty is composed by invited speakers to Immunocolombia2015 that kindly accepted to lecture in the course as well. The methodology will include access to materials (original papers, reviews, graphs, and multiple choice questions sent by the Faculty) posted on Immunopaedia by Clive Gray’s group at Cape Town University, SA, and Joseph Bellanti’s Immunology IV textbook, thanks to the agreements done between IUIS with Professors Gray and Bellanti. Finally, the course will end with a day and a half workshop on multicolor flow cytometry using regulatory cells as a model, supported by Becton-Dickinson.

3- Workshop on Veterinary Immunology.

In collaboration with the “Red Latino Americana de Inmunología Veterinaria y Comparada” and the Facultad de Ciencias Agrícolas, Universidad de Antioquia, we organized a post-congress workshop on “Intracellular Pathogenic Bacteria / New Developments vaccines in Veterinary Medicine” to be held at the Sede de Investigación Universitaria, Universidad de Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia, October 17th, 2015 (SEE ATTACHED PROGRAM).

4- Travel Awards: American Association of Immunologists (AAI) and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (B&MGF).

An important achievement for IMMUNOCOLOMBIA2015 is the participation of AAI that sponsored seven AAI Latin American members who are invited speakers at the meeting and 13 Young Investigator Travel Awards (USD500 each) for students with accepted presentations at the congress. In addition the B&MGF approved 25 travel awards (1000USD each) for non-Colombian students with accepted presentations. Awardees will also participate in the pre-congress course and will have free registration to the meeting. Awards will be presented to the students in a ceremony on October 14th evening. I have to recognize the great support received from Michele Hogan, AAI Executive Director, and her team, and from Prof Willem Hanekom, Deputy Director for Tuberculosis Research and Vaccine Development at B&MGF. Since Cubans can’t access to these US-sponsored scholarships, 2 awards were provided by IUIS Educational Committee and two more by ALAI funds.

5- Women Scientists in Latin America Recognition.

Thanks to the initiative of Olivera Finn and Narinder Mehra, chairs of the Gender Equality and Career Development Opportunities Committee, it was decided to recognize a woman scientist working in Latin America. After consultation with several immunologists in North and Latin America, Dr. Nancy Gore Saravia, scientific director of the Centro Internacional de Educación and Investigación Médica (CIDEIM) was chosen to receive the award. CIDEIM is a research center based in Cali, Colombia where Dr Saravia, an US native immunoparasitologists, has conducted research on Leishmaniasis for almost four decades. Dr. Saravia will offer a lecture during the award ceremony.

6-Congress promotion at national and international levels.

Promotion of IMMUNOCOLOMBIA2015 has been done during the last year by different strategies. Four Newsletters were published. One of them was written by Jorge Kalil, IUIS President, another by Stefan Kaufmann, IUIS Past-President, and the other two by ALAI President (SEE ATTACHED NEWSLETTERS). In these Newsletters the main messages were that Medellin is a very attractive destiny for scientific events and that IMMUNOCOLOMBIA2015 will be an immunology congress at the level of the best in the world. Promotion has been also done by posting the congress in Nature Events. At the national level the members of the organizing committee had been interviewed by the local newspapers, and TV and radio stations to promote the congress. In addition, there are daily news in Facebook and Twitter about the congress speakers, symposia, as well as the city main attractions.

6- Logistics.

The Local Organizing Committee and the congress operator have worked intensively in all the logistics aspects of the meeting. The venue is already booked, the web page is open and the platforms for abstract submission, registration, accommodation and touristic activities were open last February 2015 and are working finely. Booking accommodation for all invited speakers is almost ready. Also, the venue for the IUIS Executive Board, Committees and Council meetings is ready.

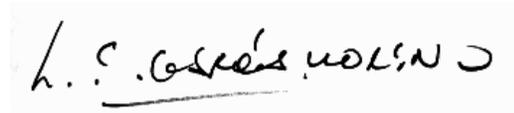
7- Fund raising.

ALAI President, the Local Organizing Committee and the Congress Operator have worked heavily with the financial aspects of the congress. Generous institutional supports were obtained from the Colombian Association of Asthma, Allergy and Immunology (ACAAI), the Universidad de Antioquia, the city of Medellin, and the Antioquia state health department. The commercial exhibition area within the Convention Center was designed for 30 booths that were sold to well recognized laboratory equipment and reagents suppliers, and biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies related to immunology. However, the lack of support from Colciencias (Colombian Government agency for Science and Technology), which initially approved and then retracted of founding the congress, and the quick devaluation of the Colombian currency is having a strong negative impact in our budget. Nevertheless, we feel optimistic that the final registration of the meeting attendees will compensate these difficulties.

ACTIVITIES WITH LATIN AMERICAN IMMUNOLOGY SOCIETIES

ALAI's President and Permanent-Secretary had been unsuccessfully trying to re-incorporate the Venezuelan immunology community to ALAI and IUIS. We had frequent contacts with Dr Juan de Sanctis, director of the Institute of Immunology of the Universidad Central in Caracas, and Dr Felix Tapia from the Institute of Biomedicine, but internal difficulties within the Venezuelan community had precluded their organization.

Regarding the creation of an Ecuadorian Society, we have been in contact with Dr. Libio Vera, a pediatrician immunologist from Quito, who has been trying to organize this society; however, so far it has not been launched yet.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light background. The signature reads "L. F. GARCIA" followed by a flourish. The first part of the signature is underlined.

LUIS F GARCIA
ALAI President 2012-2015