IUIS-ALAI-IMMUNOCOLOMBIA COURSE, "Immunoregulation in Health and Disease"
Universidad de Antioquia, Medellin, Columbia, October 10-13, 2015.

Dr Luis Garcia and his colleagues hosted IMMUNOCOLUMBIA2015, the 11th Congress of the Latin America Association of Immunology (ALAI). One of the satellite events held prior to the Congress was the first of the IUIS regional Latin America workshops, entitled the "IUIS-ALAI-IMMUNOCOLUMBIA Course". The topic of the course was "Immunoregulation in Health and Disease", to which an international faculty contributed. The main course organizers were Drs Luis Garcia and Gloria Vasquez, from Medellin. The teaching faculty was from Columbia (4), USA (4), Canada (2) and one each from Mexico, India, South Africa, Germany and Venezuela.

The 63 energetic students who participated in the course came from nine Latin America countries: Mexico, 17; Columbia, 15; Argentina, 9; Brazil, 6; Chile, 6; Cuba, 4; Peru, 2; Uruguay, 2; Ecuador, 1. They were graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and young investigators all registered for IMMUNOCOLUMBIA2015 and having oral or poster presentations.

The regulation of the immune response is a complex phenomenon involving multiple genes, molecules and cells that interplay with physiological and environmental signals to assure the homeostasis of the immune system as a whole. In the same context, failure in any of these components may have profound effects leading to abnormal immune responses and tissue damage. The general aims of the course were:

1) To review the genetic, molecular and cellular mechanisms of immune regulation in health and disease,
2) To learn the use of multicolor flow cytometry in the study of cells involved in immune regulation.

The course was directed to students with a strong background in immunology and aimed at analyzing the normal aspects of the immune regulation, as well as its alterations in both experimental and clinical models. To accomplish these goals the course included lectures by recognized experts in each one of the topics, the discussion of classic and recent cutting-edge papers on different aspects of immune regulation. Thanks to the generous commitment of Becton Dickinson, the course included a workshop on multicolor platforms for flow cytometry with lectures and computer design of antibody panels and analysis of regulatory cells.

The IUIS-ALAI-IMMUNOCOLOMBIA course is the first example of the new brand of IUIS-sponsored workshops in developing countries and more particularly in the four corners of Africa and Latin America. The IUIS Education and Clinical Immunology Committees developed the concept of interactive regional workshops supported by preparatory on line specific course modules to optimize the contact teaching time. The adaptation and posting of on-line materials is done through Immunopaedia (www.immunopaedia.org), developed by Dr Clive Gray and colleagues of the University of Cape Town. Through an agreement between IUIS, Immunopaedia and the publisher of Immunology IV (a textbook of Clinical Immunology edited by Dr Joseph Bellanti), immunological concepts, clinical findings as well as multiple illustrations are used to build dynamic course modules. Lecturers are also asked to provide key references and questions/answers for students to test their knowledge.

The IUIS-ALAI-IMMUNOCOLOMBIA COURSE was a great success as was the IMMUNOCOLUMBIA2015 Congress. Congratulations to the organizers and all participants. Immunology is alive and growing in Latin America and the next generation is very dynamic and eager to solve immunological challenges.
The 6th Infectious Diseases in Africa Symposium (IDA) is a biennial training event aimed at developing expertise and building a critical mass of young African scientists studying the immunology of the three major pathogens, HIV, TB, and malaria. This year, the symposium was also sponsored by IUIS and featured an immunology workshop consisting of a 3-day primer for the 2-day IDA symposium. This course became the first of the IUIS-FAIS African regional workshops to be held in the 4 corners of Africa every 2 years. These workshops serve not only to enhance local African scientific capacity, but also contribute to the global health agenda. Immunopaedia, which originates from Cape Town University and is headed by Dr. Clive Gray, provided a preparatory course module on Immunology of Infectious Diseases. The major sponsors were NIH, Office of AIDS Research at NIH, IUIS and Duke University, NC, USA.

The aims of the symposium were 1) to provide young African scientists with the most recent data on immune responses against HIV, TB and Malaria and which markers correlate with protection from infection while discussing mechanisms at play; 2) to allow young investigators to discuss their own research projects with experts in the field; 3) to foster collaborations and enable African network of scientists where region-specific problems can be addressed in the future.

34 students from 12 countries (South Africa, Cameroon, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Uganda, Kenya, Tunisia, Ethiopia and Gambia) participated in the course that was run in the most interactive fashion. The students heard international and local expert scientists, who presented their most recent work and were open to discussions. All students had posters and were actively involved in round table discussions where they formulated pertinent questions for speakers of the day. They also in small groups prepared a grant application relevant to the course and presented it (in 5 slides) in front of the whole audience to a mock NIH panel that then provided constructive criticism. I personally participated in the course and noted the amazing progress of the students within the 5 days of the workshop.

Half of the students were selected for a workshop in flow cytometry that took place in the great facility provided by the Cape Town HVTN (HIV Vaccine Trials Network) Immunology Laboratory, that also supported this workshop financially. Participants received theoretical lectures and also performed hands-on experiments, learned how to do proper data analysis and were made aware of the potential experimental pitfalls in flow cytometry. The courses were fantastic and we managed despite the strikes at the University and the location was breathtaking.
The 7th summer school in the Balkans was held in the small town of Becici at the coast of Montenegro, that is a much frequented place for bathers in the summer when prices are high. But in mid-October when it is often cold and rainy it is possible to obtain affordable prices. The local organizers, Dr. Gordana Stojanovic and Dr. Tamara Josicevic from the University of Montenegro at Podgorica, negotiated an exceptionally favourable agreement with the hotel (with the promising name Splendid) and due to the help of EFIS and IUIS and additional sponsors (Euroimmun and BD) we could accept 62 students and finance most of the costs for them, i.e. accommodation, subsistence and most of the travel expenses.

Participants came from 14 countries to the school (most from countries in South East Europe Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria Macedonia, Montenegro and Romania but also a few from Finland, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Spain, Russia and Ukraine).

This summer school is meanwhile well known among students and young investigators in immunology from South-East Europe. Therefore we obtained more than 100 applications, a nice proof that the school has now a standing in the region and beyond, but unfortunately had to decline many applications. The primary aim of the school is to teach immunology as the South East Europe region is still lagging behind and needs help to establish a state-of-the-art immunology. Another aim of the school was to foster contact of these young investigators with other immunological societies. They will meet foreign speakers and other students both from uproad and from other countries in the region. The region urgently needs a network of immunologists between the different countries. Noteworthy, stimulated by the EFIS-EJI-IUIS-funded schools two national Societies of Immunology were founded in 2015: Bosnia/Herzegovina and Montenegro.

The faculty consisted of lecturers from Austria (H. Stockinger, G. Stanek), Italy (Antonella Viola), The Netherlands (R. van Lier), Russia (Sergei Nedospasov), France (M. Zouali), Germany (S. Fleischer, A. Gospos, HW. Mittrucker, HJ. Seitz, B. Fleischer and J. Warneboldt). Lectures dealt with basic concepts in immunology and with clinical immunology because many participants had a medical background. Plenary lectures were held in the morning. To provide an optimal discussion, the participants formed small working groups in the afternoon according to their knowledge and interests that were guided by the faculty members. In these groups methodological aspects and new concepts were discussed. Due to the support by Euroimmun (Luebeck, Germany) several fluorescence microscopes were available and students could evaluate slides for autoantibody detection themselves. In this school Becton Dickinson brought an Accuri C6 flow cytometer and gave 3 courses for basic and advanced flow cytometry.

Presentation of the work of the young investigators themselves in a special poster session including a short oral plenary summary for each poster was again an important part of the school and took place on one entire evening. The website of the school is accessible at www.bnitm.de/seeis2015.
FOCIS 2016– ADVANCED COURSE IN BASIC & CLINICAL IMMUNOLOGY,
February 3-6, 2016, Hotel Valley Ho, Scottsdale, Arizona, USA

This year, we had 48 applicants from 21 countries for this course. There were 33 from Africa, 7 from Latin America, 6 from Asia, and 2 from Eastern Europe. The distribution was as follows: 8 from South Africa, 7 from Brazil, 5 from Kenya, 4 from Nigeria and India respectively, 3 from Egypt, 2 from Tunisia and Gambia respectively, and one from Mali, Namibia, Ghana, Serbia, Hungary, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Morocco, Argentina, Columbia, Indonesia, Uganda and Pakistan. IUIS paid for the travel award and FOCIS for registration, accommodation and meals during the course.

One student Dr Meriem Ben Ali -Nakti, Institut Pasteur de Tunis, Tunisia, was funded by the Gender, Equality and Career Development Committee and her report appears on their website.
The other 3 students received awards from the IUIS Education Committee. Their reports follow:

Dr Pascaline Fonteh, Department of Surgery, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

First of all, I would like to thank FOCIS and IUIS for the support I received to attend the FOCIS 2016 Course in Arizona. It was a truly enriching experience to learn from the Faculty, which included seasoned immunologists such as Drs Abbas, Pillai, Holland and Lichtman, to name a few. The need for such a workshop is undeniable, considering the fact that the immune system plays a role in virtually all diseases including autoimmune-related, chronic inflammation, infections, allergies, immunodeficiencies, cancer and even type II diabetes and trauma.

The workshop was instrumental as a refresher course for me to fill a knowledge-gap, support previous learning and provide updates on current immunology. This is especially true when I look back at the topics that were covered with respect to advances in the basic and clinical immunology fields and how this can potentially inform research, treatment and management of diseases going forward. This has given me a new perspective on planned research work on the immunology of acute pancreatitis, which is my focus area.

The workshop started out with an overview, discussing the innate and adaptive immune systems: the role that each arm plays in fighting infection through the generation of diversity (GOD) and result in the recognition of self from non-self. Aspects of the innate immune system such as the presence of pathogen associated molecular patterns (PAMPs) on infectious agents and of pathogen recognition receptors (PRR) on innate immune cells was highlighted. With respect to the adaptive immune system, the role of B and T cells and their maturation was discussed. Subsequent presentations expanded on innate immunity, antigen presentation, natural killer cells, T cell activation, T cell subsets, T-B cell collaboration, immune tolerance and regulation, mucosal immunity, and the diseases of the immune system i.e. immunodeficiencies, autoimmunity, transplantation, allergies, tumor immunity and eventually, translational aspects of immunology.

The highlight for me with respect to my current work was on immune tolerance and regulation. This talk was given by Dr Abbas and highlighted the importance of immune regulation which included:
1) Preventing of inappropriate reactions against self-antigens ("self-tolerance")
2) Preventing of immune responses against harmless environmental antigens, commensal microbes
3) Avoiding excessive lymphocyte activation and tissue damage during normal protective responses against infections
4) Preventing the underlying cause of immune-mediated inflammatory diseases

Acute pancreatitis is an inflammatory disease that can result in a mild response restricted to the pancreas or a severe inflammatory syndrome (SIRS) characterized by organ failure and potentially death. In patients with SIRS, there is evidence of an inevitable failure of control mechanisms in fighting the disease. Our previous proposals have focused on looking at frequencies of cells of the innate and adaptive immune system, markers of senescence, abundance of Th1, Th2 and Th17 cytokines, and cell activation status but not at the regulatory aspect. From the knowledge I acquired from the course, phenotyping the relative abundance of regulatory T cells in acute pancreatitis could assist in determining disease severity and distinguish mild from severe cases. This may pave the way to new targets for treatment e.g. suppressing processes such as the co-
stimulation involved in T cell activation as a result of B7-CD8 interaction by enhancing B7-CTLA-4 inhibitory processes.

While advances have been made in immunotherapy such as the development of novel small molecules for the treatment of inflammatory arthritis, a continual need for rational therapy to address immunodeficiencies and cancers through enhancing the immune system or to inhibit the immune system in transplantation, allergies and autoimmunity was the main take home message of the workshop.

Dr Victorio Bambini, Junior, Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
The course was one of the best academic experiences I ever had. The schedule was very well organized and the presentations were amazing. But, to me, the best part was the friendly environment, which allowed you to clarify all your doubts. Moreover, the social events were fun and provided networking opportunities with leading researchers. In summary, it is a course I would definitely mention to every researcher and clinician with a focus in immunology.

Dr Petrina Kapewangolo, Lecturer, Chemistry & Biochemistry department, Faculty of Science, University of Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia
I am grateful for the opportunity awarded to me by the Education Committee of IUIS to attend the FOCIS Advanced Course. Meeting and interacting with world renowned experts who conducted the course will be a treasured experience and I came to learn a lot from them. One thing that was brought closer to home is that the field of immunology is diverse and the courses made me realize that there is still a lot to learn and discover in this promising field. Being in the field of infectious diseases myself, the course made me mindful that a good understanding of the immune system is greatly important for one to deduce the pathogenesis of diseases and possible drug targets.

One of the courses that I conduct at the University of Namibia is Clinical Biochemistry and the Arizona workshop enhanced my understanding and knowledge on a number of topics that I cover in this course. These topics include autoimmunity, cytokines, inflammation, innate and adaptive immunity.

The course brought together participants from different countries and institutions. Therefore, it was a good platform for networking opportunity and learning more about research environments in various places. I will recommend this course to any enthusiastic immunologist and if I can afford to, I will continue attending it as it serves as a great refresher and updater to the latest in the field of clinical immunology. Thank you FOCIS.
In the intimate setting of an old cloister, in Ettal Bavaria, 60 doctoral students and 25 lecturers come together every spring to discuss the latest developments in Immunology. This School is part of the DGfI’s Academy for Immunology and offers advanced training primarily for doctoral students in the later stages of their PhD training. The School is based on plenary lectures reviewing the major themes and also offering ample time for discussions. Because of the active participation in the sessions and the intense exchange, the students have excellent opportunities for networking early on in their career.

This year, IUIS and DGfI co-sponsored 3 students from developing/emerging countries to attend this course. There were 75 applications for these 3 awards. There were 25 candidates from Latin America: Argentina, 11; Brazil, 6; Uruguay, 5; Mexico, Bolivia and Colombia, 1 each. A total of 14 students applied from Africa: 3 from the Gambia and Kenya, 2 from Algeria and Tunisia and one each from Cameroon, Kenya, Tanzania, Mali and Nigeria. 19 applications were received from Asia: 4 from Iran, 3 from India, 2 from Turkey, and one each from Pakistan, Thailand, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Indonesia, China and Malaysia. There were also 17 applicants from Eastern Europe: 7 from Serbia, 4 from Hungary, one each from Romania, Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Georgia and Croatia. Six applicants were disqualified.

Ramona Pap, PhD student, University of Pécs, Hungary

Having received a travel award from DGfI/IUIS, I was able to attend the 12th Spring School on Immunology training course of the German Society for Immunology, held in Ettal, Bavaria, Germany. The DGfI Spring School on Immunology is an advanced training in specialized immunological topics, suited for young researchers and physicians with solid immunological knowledge. The meeting was a truly international event.

Plenary sessions covered genetic bases of immune evasion in lymphoid malignancies, recent developments in innate immunity, adaptive immunity, tumor immunity, allergy, autoimmunity, infection, signaling and interaction, and six poster sessions covered a wide range of specialized subjects. Furthermore the meeting provided an opportunity to participate in an advanced practical course in flow cytometry to master and get familiar with the latest improvements and developments in this area. Plenary sessions also provided a great chance to network and build up international connections and lay the foundations of future collaborations.

The Spring School on Immunology organized a “Questions and Answers” session during the evenings, where all participants could talk to the day’s presenters individually. In my opinion this was the most valuable part of the entire conference – we had the chance to ask directly from the presenters any scientific, technical, or even personal question about their research and experiences – provided a novel and extremely useful experience and was a great help to embed these new findings into our own research perspectives.

I am in the final year of my PhD studies at the University of Pécs where I have been studying the effect of glucocorticoids on T regulatory cells and their cytokine production in mice and on the in vitro development of functional thymus-derived and induced Treg cells. I have been using this model system to investigate several aspects of function, activation, differentiation and proliferation capacity of regulatory T cells. Several presentations were directly connected to my research area such as topics about the T cell development and signaling pathways, and cellular growth. I very much enjoyed hearing about new advancements in this field at first hand, from leading scientists. Moreover, it was also a great opportunity for me to increase my knowledge about human Treg development, and therapy based research.
I presented a poster as a summary of the latest results of my research at the Spring School of Immunology and I was really pleased with the encouraging and helpful feedback that I received. It was rewarding to be able to contribute to the meeting, and I felt a real sense of achievement about what I have accomplished over the last three years, and as a result of my work I could participate in this conference. I could also build up new connections and gained promising ideas to test in my last experiments and begin to think about the dreaded question “what’s next?”

I would therefore like to thank the DGfI/IUIS for their part in making it possible for me to attend this excellent meeting, as well as for other benefits I have enjoyed as a student member of the society.

Kaouthar Mejri, PhD, Mornag, Tunisia

I am really grateful for having the opportunity to attend the 12th Spring School on immunology in Ettal. When I looked at the program, it seemed to be rich in lectures concerning innate and adaptive immunity, autoimmunity, infection and cancer.

I was highly impressed seeing the smoothness in which the organizing committee alternated theses lectures with the question and answer session. In fact, I am used to have the 5 to 10 minute discussion after each lecture, but having a session for the questions and answers in small groups, that was the first for me and that was really interactive. I was surprised to see that the poster session was after dinner, however unexpectedly this session was as interactive as the questions and answers.

With a general look, the program seemed to be a little bit tough, however it was so smooth that we didn’t feel the time go by. In fact the organizers mixed pleasure with learning in an impressive way. Going back to the lectures, the teachers quenched our thirst with the updated knowledge in their field of research (they even presented their unpublished data). They inflamed our curiosity with their results and that led to deeper questions. The interactive discussions (with teachers and students) permitted to learn from their experience and also to start new collaborations. I was really impressed by the easiness the talk went through in an atmosphere that included teachers and students from all over the world.

As for what I missed there, was really that the practical course should be more practical (wet lab or at least a wet demonstration of how to use the software for the beginners: not just having the results). That was a fruitful experience and I was really lucky to be there. Thus, I hope that this course enlightens with its success all those who seek learning.

Kaouther and Luz amazed by snow
Luz Mora-Velandia, PhD student, UNAM-Mexico City

For me the experience to participate in the 12th Spring School on Immunology in Ettal, Bavaria, Germany, thanks to the founding provided by DGfI/IUIS, was absolutely awesome. My experience began when I sent the application form for the scholarship hoping for the best, but knowing that for sure there would be many other applicants as enthusiastic and probably better qualified than me. The final answer came a couple of days before Christmas and it was one of the best Christmas gifts ever.

The whole experience of the 12th Spring School for anyone who has special interest in immunology is absolutely recommendable and let me resume why I think so. First, the general organization of the school is remarkable. Second, the quality of the talks was absolutely great. Even better, the opportunity to interact directly during the week with most of the speakers with great experience in the field and a marvelous disposition to have a chat during meals and answer each of our questions during the “Questions and Answers” sessions was great. These Q&A sessions are a perfect idea to summarize the topics reviewed during the day. Third, the poster sessions were completely different and very useful when compared to other poster sessions in which I had participated during different events. All the participants were really interested in asking about everyone’s work and made very constructive comments; for me the feedback from professors and students really have helped my present research, focused on human Innate Lymphoid Cells development. This is the reason why also the Andreas Diefenbach’s talk was one of my favorites. Fourth, it was an amazing opportunity to closely meet people from around the world, who actually are going through the same process of finishing a PhD, or are already on “the other side”. Here you realize that at the end of the day everyone is pretty much similar and has somehow the same kind of troubles. And last but not least, the location in Bavaria is AMAZING, especially for me who did not have the chance to enjoy the snow, so every time that I felt a little bit tired (about jet lag, language or sometimes the exhaustive sessions) all that I needed was to take a look outside and everything was perfect.
I am in my last year of the PhD training in Immunology at UNAM in Mexico City and this opportunity helped me to have a broader perspective of what I want to do in a near future. I can also say thanks to the Spring School for the good new friends from around the world.

In summary, if anyone has doubts about applying for an opportunity to attend any of the training courseds organized by the DGfI or IUIS, my recommendation is: YES you must apply!! This is a real and great opportunity to fulfill your PhD training. Thanks again to the DGfI and IUIS for the chance.
IUIS-FAIS ImmunoTunisia Workshop “Tolerance and Autoimmunity”
Hotel Le Royal – Yesmine, Hammamet, April 4-8 2016
Organizers: Drs Hatem Masmoudi, Ridha Barbouche and Michelle Letarte

This course represents the realization of the 3rd IUIS regional workshop and the 2nd IUIS-FAIS one in Africa. A total of 57 students participated: 37 were from Tunisia, 8 from Morocco, 5 from Algeria, 3 from Burkina Faso, 2 from Côte d’Ivoire, and 1 each from Senegal and Niger. They were supplied with preparatory on line material in the form of a specifically produced Immunopaedia course module. All students and staff also received a complimentary copy of the Immunology IV textbook, edited and even autographed by Dr Joe Bellanti. Forty students received a bursary to attend the course, including the cost of the flight for 14 of them. The French Society of Immunology contributed flights for French speakers. The Tunisian Society of Immunology and the Institut Pasteur de Tunis also supported the event.

The course was aimed at residents in Immunology (MD and pharmacists), MSc and PhD students, post-doctoral fellows, research assistants and young lecturers working in the area of Autoimmunity. They were recruited form Northern Africa or french-speaking African countries. Most of the lectures were in French, but with slides in English and the discussions took place in both languages. Topic discussed were Fundamental Basis of Immune Tolerance and of Autoimmunity, Autoimmune disorders, and Developments in Biotherapy.

Several professors and young researchers from Tunisia contributed to the program organization and presented excellent lectures on tolerance autoimmune disorders (such as lupus, celiac disease, dermatoses, pemphigus) and their underlying mechanisms (Drs Hatem Masmoudi, Ridha Barbouche, Yousr Gorgi, Imen Sfar, Melika Ben Ahmed, Lilia Laadhar, Nadine Cerf-Bensussan and Mariem Kallel). It should be reminded that due to consanguineous marriages, autoimmune disorders have a high prevalence in North Africa. That is how the topic of this regional IUIS workshop was selected.

Dr Abdallah Badou from Casablanca and Dr Abdel Wakkash, originally from Maroc and working in Nice, gave lectures in basic immunology. Dr Joe Bellanti, from Washington, spoke on epigenetics and tolerance breakage in autoimmune diseases. Dr Kamel Djenouhat from Alger and Dr Seppo Meri from Helsinki talked about the role of complement in autoimmunity. Dr Boubacar Maiga from Mali lectured on vaccination in the context of autoimmune diseases and autoimmune disorders as possible side effects of vaccination. Dr Clive Gray from Cape Town, and Dr Jorge Kalil of Sao Paulo, talked about how infections can affect autoimmunity. Dr Alberto Mantovani from Milan, lectured on negative pathways of innate immunity while Dr Joaquim Madrenas from Montreal explained how the microbiome acts as an immunoregulatory organ and Dr Michelle Letarte from Toronto discussed how the vascular endothelium contributes to immunoregulation. Dr Christian Boitard from Paris lectured on Type I Diabetes. Dr Roland Liblaud from Toulouse discussed Multiple Sclerosis including novel targeting immunotherapies.

The workshop was run in a very interactive manner with round table discussions every afternoon with the goal of preparing student’s questions most appropriate for the speakers of the day. Every student also presented a poster on his/her work and the quality of the research and their performance was excellent. It was a very dynamic course with a great ambiance in an excellent location, highly suitable for exchanges of ideas and scientific discussions.
AAI INTRODUCTORY COURSE IN IMMUNOLOGY
Long Beach Convention Center, Long Beach, California, USA, JULY 9-14th, 2016.
Organizer: Dr. Juan-Carlos Zuniga-Pflücker

We received 51 applications for this course with 25 from Latin America: Brazil 16, Argentina 4; Cuba 2; and one each from Columbia, Uruguay and Chile. From the African continent, we had 19 applicants, 5 from Ghana, 4 from Kenya, 3 from Morocco, one each from Gabon, Ivory Coast, The Gambia, Nigeria, Uganda, South Africa and Egypt. We had 3 applicants from India, 2 from Pakistan, and one each from Mongolia and Iran.
Here are the comments by the 3 who won the travel awards of the Education Committee and the support of AAI for registration and accommodation in Long Beach, CA.

Maria Paula Caruso, PhD student, Instituto de Investigaciones Biomédicas en Retrovirus y SIDA, UBA – CONICET, Buenos Aires, Argentina

I wish to thank immensely for the opportunity given to me to participate in the AAI Introductory Course in Immunology. I would like to express how very grateful and honored I felt when I was informed I had been selected for a travel award to attend to the course. I want to especially thank Dr Michelle Letarte (Chair from IUIS Education Committee) and Dr Mary Litzinger (Manager of Educational and Career Development Programs from AAI) for their kind treatment and for helping in coordinating all details of the trip.

Arriving in the USA always produces in me admiration for the wonderful country it is, and Long Beach was a great venue for this experience. Having the opportunity to listen to world-renowned immunologist speakers in interactive and dynamic classes let me expand and improve a lot my knowledge and made the experience totally enriching. All lectures given were highly fulfilling and very enriching for my professional training.

It was also fantastic because it gave me the chance to get in touch with scientists, researchers and students from many parts of the world and share with them not only knowledge and professional issues but also to understand their customs, cultures and professional and national situations. I leave this course with many friends, with whom I will surely keep in touch!

On the other hand, for those who do not speak English as a language of origin, to practice our English and raise our level of conversation was very important because we do not always have many opportunities to do so.

You can be sure that I will put in practice all the knowledge acquired in the course to my professional future and also convey and discuss it with my laboratory partners in Argentina (INBIRS, Instituto de Investigaciones Biomédicas en Retrovirus y SIDA, Universidad de Buenos Aires – CONICET).

Obviously, I would love to participate in the next AAI Advanced Course in Immunology to continue growing and improving together! I hope to receive you in Buenos Aires and in our laboratory someday to be able to give back for your kindness.

Nathan Shaviya, PhD Student in Medical Immunology, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kakamega, Kenya

I would like to thank the IUIS and AAI for this opportunity. Attending the immunology course was an amazing experience that will forever change my thinking and perceptions as a scientist. It was my first visit to the United States of America and did not disappoint, it was wonderful to see a completely different way of life from what I am used to.

I learned a lot in a short time with the faculty presenting lots of new findings and how Immunology is evolving with many new exciting things being discovered. The course was intensive and we successfully covered over 20 core areas within 6 days. The course materials were clear and easy to follow. The presentations were very good and the facilitators had lots of enthusiasm in delivering their lectures. We had adequate time for rest and lunch breaks, which kept us fresh for each lecture. Most of the participants were amazing and I gained some experience during our discussions.

Overall, the lectures were of very good quality and we were exposed to both old and new research investigations in Immunology and the explanations gave a better understanding of the complex nature of the
human immune system and how pathogens manipulate this system for their survival and propagate diseases. You could clearly see the difference between textbook Immunology and what is real at the bench. With all the topics covered, I believe I am well equipped with cutting-edge knowledge and skills, which I will in turn apply in my day-to-day practice of immunology and immunological experiments.

Among the topics discussed, I particularly enjoyed the talks on Complement, Dendritic cells, B cells activation, Mucosal Immunity, Humoral Immunity and Immunity to Bacterial pathogens. Most importantly, this course has enhanced my knowledge in the immunological basis of the three major infectious diseases, HIV, tuberculosis and malaria that are endemic in most African countries.

I finally would like to thank Dr. Mary Litzinger for her wonderful reception and warm welcome to the course and by extension the U.S.A., Dr. JC Zuniga-Pflücker for running the course in a very organized and professional manner and lastly Dr. Michelle Letarte for granting me this opportunity which is very rare.

Daniel Antwi-Berko, PhD student, Kwame Nkrumah University Of Science And Technology, Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital Kumasi, Ghana

I wish to begin this report with a special acknowledgement of the magnanimous scholarship assistance I received from the International Union of Immunological Societies (IUIS) in attending the American Association of Immunologists Introductory Course in Immunology. On the 8th of July, I left Accra, Ghana, transited in Paris and arrived in the USA at about 6:45pm local time, took a cab to the Residence Inn Long Beach Hotel, and was quickly checked into my hotel room and was really impressed with the accommodation.

After breakfast at the hotel the next morning, I departed for the Long Beach convention center and arrived at the venue 45 minute earlier than the scheduled start time. As I hanged around, I met one of the IUIS scholars, Nathan Shaviya, and we had a familiarization talk. We then went to the registration desk to collect thereregistration items, which included printed handouts of the course, pens, a notepad, a bag, an AAI mug and a few fliers.

There were over 200 participants in the course, comprising a very diverse group of students, researchers, industry workers and academic facilitators. I was really fascinated and motivated even further by the caliber and background of the participants I met. It was such an amazing event. The whole meeting started with brief opening comments by Dr. Mary Litzinger who acknowledged our presence at the gathering. Honestly, I was so excited and pledged myself this was a lifetime experience I was prepared to make full benefit of.

The course started with remarkable organization of the schedule and lectures given by very renowned academic professors and researchers. The lectures they provided were extremely world-class, easy to follow, understandable and with outstanding patience they responded to all our questions and remarks. The lectures were so insightful that they reminded me some of the gaps in my undergraduate lessons in immunology, helped me to understand very well some areas I needed so much and also opened my mind to more current happenings, discoveries and pharmaceutical developments in immunology. Some of the courses I enjoyed most included: introduction to the immune system, Innate immunity: Introduction to the Cells, Introduction to adaptive immunity, signaling in the immune system, Immunity to bacterial pathogens among others (just to mention a few).

I am sure that, this is one of the best training courses I have ever attended. Indeed the organization was top-notch, with remarkable selection of the course faculty and classical arrangement of the topics. This made it so comprehensive to follow one lecture after the other. There was enough time between lectures for me to relax, assimilate the talks and refresh myself for the subsequent lectures.

This provided me with a refocused and revitalized interest in the study of immunology. It is no doubt that I now aspire more than ever to commit myself to the study of the immune system because of the overwhelming evidence I saw of the benefits it provides to us especially meeting the needs of the sick and disadvantaged in medical care. Again, It provided me with the opportunity to interact with some of the best brains in the world of immunology. It gave me also the experience of interacting with a very unique and dynamic group of participants, making new friends and building a rich network of scientist.
After the close of the course, I stayed one more day at Long Beach. Having been motivated by the lectures I took at the course, I visited the St. Mary Medical Center to learn about the healthcare system in the USA, with special focus on disease diagnosis (Laboratory investigations). I am deeply grateful to Dr Timothy Flaming of the Clinical Laboratory at the St. Mary Medical Center for receiving me without any prior appointment. I also visited the campus of the California State University Long Beach. I left the USA on the 16th July, 2016 and safely arrived back to Ghana.

In fact all this would not have been possible without the financial support I received from the AAI and IUIS. I am extremely grateful to them for sponsoring me to attend this course, visit the USA for the first time, accommodate me in a first class hotel in the USA and meet world renowned scientist from whom I had only heard their name or read about their work. Long live IUIS, long live AAI!!!

I would like to personally thank Dr. Michelle Letarte and Dr. Mary Litzinger for the overwhelming patience, guidance and assistance they offered me from the start of the application till I returned from the USA. Thank you so much for this life changing experience and I shall forever be indebted to IUIS and AAI for making this a reality for me. I will highly recommend this course and training to people interested in medicine and biology because of the enriching academic and personal experience it comes with. GOD RICHLY BLESS YOU ALL!

Nathan Shaviya, Juan Carlos Zuniga-Pfucker, Maria Paula and Daniel Antwi-Berko