

Introduction

Proceedings from the 4th Advances Against Aspergillosis Conference

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The 4th Advances Against Aspergillosis (AAA) conference was held in Rome, Italy from 4–6 February 2010, and co-organized by Drs David W. Denning, William J. Steinbach, and David A. Stevens. As with the previous three meetings, expert clinicians and scientists as well as healthcare professionals and trainees from around the world attended. The goal of the AAA conferences is to create a forum for interaction and collaboration focused on advancing the field of aspergillosis. An important benefit of AAA conferences to junior investigators and trainees is the opportunity to interact with clinical and basic science experts in aspergillosis. This interaction occurs in several different ways: at formal lectures including ‘Meet the Professor’ sessions, poster presentations, and during coffee and tea breaks. At the 4th AAA meeting, there was a greater effort made in outreach to patients and the general public, including a separate half-day session in which experts gave talks tailored to patients and the general public before the formal meeting began.

The AAA conferences continue to have an important influence in the field and have experienced significant growth since the initial meeting in 2004. The 4th AAA conference hosted 533 attendees from 49 countries. In comparison, the 2008 meeting held in Miami was attended by 351 people from 26 countries. The 4th AAA conference also featured 188 abstracts, and over 40 invited talks delivered by both international experts in aspergillosis as well as junior investigators.

As with prior AAA meetings, an important goal of the 4th AAA conference was to publish the major findings presented in a peer-reviewed journal. Drs Oliver Cornely, Michael Bromley, and Brahm Segal served as Editors for the 4th AAA supplement in *Medical Mycology*. We believe that the papers published in this special supplement encapsulate the progress, insights, and perspectives for future research in the field of aspergillosis.

The organization of the supplement parallels the major themes at the 4th AAA conference. The topics span clinical and basic science research, and include the following: (i) Interaction of *Aspergillus* with host cells; (ii) Innate and antigen-driven immune responses to *Aspergillus*; (iii) Immunotherapy (including vaccine-based strategies); (iv) insights into pathogenesis gained from animal models of aspergillosis; (v) epidemiology of invasive aspergillosis (including classical risk factors, immunosuppression in critically ill patients, and the effect of gene polymorphisms on risk of aspergillosis); (vi) antifungal resistance and virulence factors; and (vii) current and newer treatment strategies.

We thank the authors who contributed their expertise to the supplement. We realize that a substantial time commitment is required to write cutting-edge reviews, and we greatly appreciate their efforts. Each paper was reviewed by at least two experts and an Editor, and we thank the reviewers for their diligent efforts. We are also grateful to the co-organizers of the AAA meetings, Drs Denning, Steinbach, and Stevens for their outstanding leadership and organizational skills. The funding provided by our pharmaceutical sponsors was critical for the success of the meeting, and is gratefully acknowledged. Finally, we are indebted to Ira Salkin, PhD, Chief Editor at *Medical Mycology*, and the editorial staff at Informa for their expertise, professionalism, and willingness to help.

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The success of the 4th AAA meeting and future meetings depends on the high quality of the research presented and our ability to disseminate this knowledge both at the meetings and via peer-reviewed publications as well

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as on the internet. Plans are in progress for the 5th AAA conference to be held in 2012. We invite you to contribute to the science and to offer any suggestions to enhance the value of this outstanding conference.