

ICAV 7th International Symposium “Challenging Pandemics: Science, Policy, Preparedness” Symposium Overview

1-4 November 2008, Beijing, China

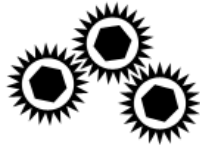
The ICAV 7th International Symposium took place from 1-4 November 2008 in Beijing, China. The Symposium, co-organized with the Institute of Microbiology, Chinese Academy of Science (IMCAS), was the largest ICAV symposium to date, attended by 141 scientists and experts from 15 countries, including Australia, Canada, China, Germany, Belgium, Ghana, Italy, Nigeria, Tunisia, France, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, UK and USA. The objectives of the symposium were to accelerate the development of novel, low-cost anti-virals for emerging and neglected diseases by assembling experts in all areas of drug discovery and development, and to encourage scientific collaborations on focused, interdisciplinary research for novel anti-viral therapeutics.

The symposium featured sessions combining policy, science and surveillance on avian influenza, hepatitis, dengue, enteroviruses, and Herbomics, a Chinese program to develop pharmaceuticals from traditional herbal medicines. The conference featured talks from many Chinese and international scientists and public health officials. Professor Zhu Chen, the Chinese Minister of Health gave a keynote address at the opening gala dinner.

Numerous new collaborations were fostered during the symposium, including a proposed collaboration between scientists from several European countries, Tunisia, Nigeria and Ghana to develop novel anti-virals for polio, as an integral part of the global eradication strategy.

A Memorandum of Understanding inaugurating the West African Viral Surveillance Network (WAVS) was signed by 12 institutions, including the National Biotechnology Development Agency, Federal Ministry of Science and Technology, Nigeria; International Consortium on Anti-Virals, Canada; Federal Ministry of Health, Nigeria; University of Abuja, Nigeria; University of Lagos, Nigeria; Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research, Ghana; Institute for Glycomics, Griffith University, Australia; Toronto General Research Institute, University Health Network/University of Toronto, Canada; Institute of Biochemistry, Center for Structural and Cell Biology in Medicine, University of Lubeck, Germany; WHO Polio Laboratory, College of Medicine, University of Ibadan, Nigeria; CNRS-University of Marseille, France; and the Institute of Microbiology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing, China. The objective of the MOU is to strengthen viral surveillance research in West Africa by facilitating collaborations and research capacity building programs. The first projects that the network will implement will be the development of a viral sequence database and a project to examine polio virus isolates from Northern Nigeria where eradication efforts are being frustrated by dramatically reduced vaccination efficacy.

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An agreement in principle was reached to create national ICAVs in selected countries around the world at a meeting of the ICAV International Steering Committee. The committee agreed to explore the possibility of creating national ICAV organizations, starting in Australia, China, France, Germany and Slovakia, building on each country's unique resources and expertise.

ICAV announced that it will hold a workshop on modelling and the role of anti-viral interventions in pandemic containment outbreaks in the near future. The workshop will focus on incorporating the pharmacological profiles of strategies in the ICAV pipeline into containment models.

ICAV would like to thank the sponsors of the conference: the Institute of Microbiology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (IMCAS), the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), International Science and Technology Partnerships Canada Inc. and Air Canada.

The 8th ICAV International Symposium will be held in Marseille, France in September 2009.