

Fall 2011 President's Message

Submitted by

Stefano Bonassi, IAEMS President

Dear EMS members,

It is now one year since we launched the proposal to change the name of the International Association of Environmental Mutagens Societies, searching a definition more properly reflecting the current activity of EMS societies. I will not report here the reasons for the change, which have been the object of my last President's letter, and that have been extensively discussed in a commentary published by David DeMarini and Silvio deFlora in the journal *Mutation Research* (705:201–204, 2010). The position of all IAEMS societies about the proposal to change the name in Environmental Genomics Society has been extensively discussed this year within most EMS societies, and a blog has been open in the IAEMS Web site. Unfortunately the blog did not work well, on the contrary the discussion within societies was intense, and in most cases I personally met national or regional councils to collect the orientation of the society.

The position of the societies that have formally replied to the proposal was very homogeneous. In brief, the large majority of members agreed and encouraged the whole idea of changing the name. The definition of Environmental mutagenesis was perceived as obsolete especially by young scientists, and many members emphasized as their work cannot be classified under this definition. The new name of Environmental Genomics Society was appreciated by a proportion of members varying from 30 to 50%, but a strong opposition emerged as well, based on the limited extent of the concept of Genomics and to the strict link to a specific technique. Clearly the whole concept of environmental genomics was not familiar to those who expressed this position. However, it became evident that if the concept was not understood within the society how can we expect that is understood outside the society? Therefore, we decided to abandon this proposal and—painfully—re-open the search for new name proposals. One important piece of information we collected from this round was the key words which according to EMS members characterize our interests and activities. There was a very good agreement on three words, i.e., Environment, Genes, and Health. It was interesting to discover that these words are in the name of the Chinese EMS, the largest within IAEMS.

I think these three words represent a good base for identifying the new candidate name, and I hope all local societies can start considering these key words. Great expectation comes from the work of a specific group of the US-EMS coordinate by Jeffrey Schartz committed to discuss the new EMS name. I hope that for the coming meeting of Montreal next October a position will be reached, and will provide a precious contribution for all EMS societies.

Besides the new name issue, which has occupied most of the IAEMS executive board activities this year, some formal changes should be reported. This year the Brazilian society (SBCTMA) has independently joined IAEMS, still participating as an active member of ALAMCTA. This is an important recognition for a large and active society which will be in charge of organizing the next XI ICEM. Similarly, last December there has been in Thailand the 2nd meeting of the Asian Association of EMS (AEMS), an exciting initiative which aims at creating a real network of Asian EMS. So far this is a scientific collaboration, but there is the real perspective of creating a regional body within IAEMS, linking all Asian societies.

There is another initiative that I would like to advertise. Under the coordination of the IAEMS secretary, Hester Vismer, and with the help of some key persons in the history of the society we started collecting all documents concerning major events organized by IAEMS, among them ICEMS, ICEMHP, ICMMA, and Hollaender courses. If you have in your archives old brochures of early meetings please contact [Hester Vismer](#). We have collected material about most meetings, but some from 80s and 90s is still missing.

I hope this effort of preserving our history while we try to modernize the structure of our societies will be appreciated.

I take the opportunity of this message to remind you of the next ICEMHP meeting that will be held in March 26–29, 2012, in Doha, Qatar (ask [William Au](#) for information), and please contact your travel agents for the next ICEM in Brazil in 2013, and the next ICMAA that will be held in Wien, Austria, in 2014.

Best regards,

Stefano Bonassi, Ph.D.

President, IAEMS