EU Patients' Rights to Information Have No Boundaries

by Dr. Bernard Gouget

SFBC-EFCC Representative; IFCC Executive Board Member
Deputy Secretary General, International Francophone Federation of Clinical Biology and Laboratory Medicine (FIFBCML)

The role of the citizens and citizens' organizations as actors of public policies in Europe has been constantly growing during the past decades. European countries have addressed the question of patient rights of health services users, establishing charters or a comprehensive body of legislation enabling the affirmation of those rights. These obviously depend on the quality of health system and the way healthcare is organized. We are witnessing today an evolution in public policy where, increasingly, the tendency is to advocate citizen's involvement with to the development of participatory methods in various European countries, and to give the individual an increasing say in health related matters.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Patients' rights vary, often depending upon prevailing cultural and social norms. Different models of the patient-physician relationship have been developed, and these have informed the particular rights to which patients are entitled. In Europe, for instance, there are different models, which depict this relationship. Each of these suggests different professional obligations of the physician toward the patient. There is still debate about how best to conceptualize this relationship, but there is also growing international consensus that all patients have a fundamental right to privacy, to the confidentiality of their medical information, to consent to or to refuse treatment, and to be informed about risk associated with medical procedures. The patients' expectations with regards to health professionals are not limited solely to technical aspects of care but are also concerned with relational and human aspects. Advance in medical sciences and the development of the Internet have increased patients' knowledge and awareness, and improved their capacity to exchange views and to question professionals. In the chronic diseases, people sometimes have a thorough knowledge of their illness, which must be taken account.

While the doctor remains dominant in the care of patients, the notion of a bond between the doctor and the patient must be built as an integral part of the entire body of health care, medical and welfare professionals--that includes the medical biologist. The patient places his trust in the hands of health professionals; hence, doctor, medical biologist, and nursing staff must keep a close watch on the patient, enabling them to adapt their views, treatment, and assessment accordingly. This interactive and clear process comprises listening, verbal exchanges, and care provision. It enables a solid relationship to be built which is essential for fighting the illness.

Information is not an end in itself but a means of allowing a person to make free and informed choices. The manner in which information is transmitted is as important as the information itself. Oral transmission of information is crucial. The medical biologist as well as the doctor must find out whether the patient understands the facts and results relating to his case and ascertain his level of satisfaction. Obviously, the level of information will depend on the patient's state of health and capacity to decide for himself; the patient's family circle and must be taken into account in the information process. Every patient must be provided with information in his own language. Only informed consent and informed acceptance of risks involved can be valid; access to personalized information is a vital step towards reducing illness.

The reinforcement of Patients' rights will become effective only with the cooperation and commitment of all healthcare professionals and stakeholders in every EU country. How effective individual rights turn out in practice will depend to a large extend on the collective response. Giving a voice to users and their representatives is necessary for the adoption of health democracy. On April 18, the 5th European Patient Rights day is a common occasion to inform, discuss and take commitments to improve patients' rights in Europe and put citizens at the center of health policy.

EDMA Appoints New Director General

EDMA, the European Diagnostic Manufacturers Association, is pleased to announce the appointment of Philippe Jacon as new Director General ad interim.

He succeeds Christine Tarrajat in the highest management position of the in vitro diagnostics association. Dr. Jürgen Schulze, EDMA President, commented on the occasion: "Christine has greatly supported EDMA during the past eight years by increasing the association's membership base to 22 national associations and 42 leading IVD companies. I wish Christine all the best in her future endeavors." He further added that the association is today a strong voice of the IVD industry in Europe. "Globalization is changing the role and positioning of EDMA within the global network of IVD associations. To that end, we must move EDMA to the next stage.

I happily welcome Philippe Jacon as our new Director General ad interim. Thanks to his high-level network within the in vitro Diagnostics industry, both at the corporate and the association level, Philippe is in an excellent position to help EDMA strengthen its role." Philippe has been with BD for 22 years and has held several positions within the company, including President of BD Diagnostics - Diagnostic Systems. BD, a long-standing member of EDMA, is kindly supporting the association by making Philippe available for the position of Director General.

Philippe Jacon expressed true enthusiasm for his new role: "It is for me an immense pleasure to support EDMA. I am looking forward to working together with the EDMA team to promote the huge benefits the in vitro diagnostics industry brings to national healthcare systems. I can see huge potential for governments to manage their healthcare budgets through screening, diagnosing and providing information to select the most appropriate therapy - all of which will translate into healthier citizens."

Serbian National Congress Venue for 6th EFCC Balkan Region Symposium

by Prof. Dr. Nada Majkic-Singh,
President of the Society of Medical Biochemists of Serbia and the Scientific Committees of the Congress and Symposium

Photo: The Participants on the Opening Ceremony 6th EFCC Symposium for Balkan Region and 17th Serbian Congress, in the middle from left to right: S. Ignjatovic, D. Goldberg, N. Majkic-Singh, V. Blaton, O. Jankovic

During October 4-9, 2010, Belgrade was the host of the 17th Congress of Medical Biochemistry and Laboratory Medicine with international participation organized by the Society of Medical Biochemists of Serbia and the Institute of Medical Biochemistry of the Clinical Centre of Serbia. As part of the Congress, on October 7, 2010, the 6th EFCC Symposium for the Balkan Region took place, organized separately under the title Implementing Laboratory Automation, Quality and Efficiency. Symposium coordinators were Prof. Nada Majkic-Singh on behalf of the Society of Medical Biochemists of Serbia and Professor Victor Blaton, Former EFCC President, on behalf of the European Federation for Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine. The Congress and Symposium were held under the auspices of the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (IFCC), European Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (EFCC) and the Balkan Clinical Laboratory Federation (BCLF), as well as the Ministry of Science of the Republic of Serbia.

During the Opening ceremony, Prof. Victor Blaton received an Honorary Diploma from the Society of Medical Biochemists of Serbia, the highest recognition awarded by the Society, for his contribution to the development of clinical chemistry and laboratory medicine in Serbia and the Balkan region and for promoting these disciplines in Serbia and the global professional community.

Celebration of the 55th jubilee anniversary of the founding of the Society of Medical Biochemists of Serbia coincided with the Congress. On this occasion, Prof. Nada Majkic-Singh evoked the achievements and activities of the Society of Medical Biochemists of Serbia since its establishment up to this day, by presenting the Historical Background, Aims of the Society, Society Organization, and Professional, Publishing, Congressional and other Activities.

Prof. David Goldberg from Canada gave the Opening lecture on "Wine and Health: A Paradigm for Alcohol and Antioxidants" explaining the relative contributions of ethanol and the polyphenolic antioxidants of red wine by considering their potential to inhibit atherogenesis and the mechanisms involved. Other plenary sections of the 17th Congress of Medical Biochemistry and Laboratory Medicine were dedicated to the latest findings on biochemical markers for various diseases and states and their application, primarily the Detection and Clinical Significance of Free Radicals in Circulation describing the complexity of free radical metabolism in human erythrocytes (M. Spasic), the diagnostic and therapeutic significance of oxidative stress parameters in children

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Serbian National Congress Venue for 6th EFCC Balkan Region Symposium

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(M. Bajcetic) and the application of electron paramagnetic resonance as a powerful tool of medical biochemistry in discovering mechanisms of disease and treatment prospects (I. Spasojevic).

The Thyroid Disease Diagnostics section included the following lectures: "Diagnosis of Thyroid Disease" (M. Zarkovic), "Genetics of Thyroid Cancer" (S. Damjanovic), "Measuring Thyroglobulin Concentrations in Patients with Differentiated Thyroid Carcinoma" (S. Savin) and "The Importance of Hormones and Proteins Determination in the Material Obtained by Fine Needle Aspiration Biopsy" (B. Trbojevic).

Latest Knowledge about the "Clinical Value of Lipopolysaccharide-Binding Protein in Infection and Sepsis" (D. Schmidt), "The ESR Test: An Old Test with New Concepts" (M. Plebani and E. Piva), "D-Dimer in the Management of Venous Thromboembolism" (G. Le Gal) and "Point-of-Care D-Dimer Testing" (J. Antovic), "Sensitive Cardiac Troponin Assays: Myth and Magic or A Practical Way Forward?" (D. Gaze), and "Diagnostic and Prognostic Information Provided by a High Sensitivity Assay for Cardiac Troponin T" (J. Jarausch) were all presented in the section New Biochemical Markers. The Biochemical Markers of Kidney Diseases section was devoted to "Serum and Urinary Biomarkers Determination" (V. Lezajic), "Cardiovascular Biomarkers in Chronic Kidney Disease" (M. Deric), "Urinary NGAL as a Novel Biomarker for the Early Detection of Acute Kidney Injury" (KM Schmidt-Ott), and the "Importance of KIM-1 Determination in Tissue and Urine of Patients with Different Kidney Diseases" (S. Simic-Ogrizovic). Very important sections dealt with Protein Analysis at the Molecular Level: from fundamental research to the application in medicine, providing insights into "Individualized Therapy and Role of Thiopurine S-Methyltransferase Protein and Genetic Variants" (S. Pavlovic), "A Possible Role of MARP Protein Family in Molecular Mechanism of Tumorogenesis," and the "Role of rRNA Methyltransferases in Resistance to Antibiotics." The Significance of Genetic Polymorphism as a Marker for Proneness to Disease Formation (I. Novakovic), e.g., in relation to the "Genetic Epidemiologic Approach" (T. Pekmezovic), "Genetic Predisposition to Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus" (K. Stankov), and "The Role of GSTM1 Polymorphism in Patients with Renal and Urinary Bladder Tumors" (T. Simic) was also discussed.

In the course of the 6th EFCC Symposium for Balkan Region prominent foreign and local experts introduced to the participants the means for achieving full automation and laboratory consolidation with the goal of adhering to the philosophy of Lean and Six Sigma laboratory efficiency. Experts from Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and Belgium revealed their experiences along with distinguished local scientists. The following lectures were presented:

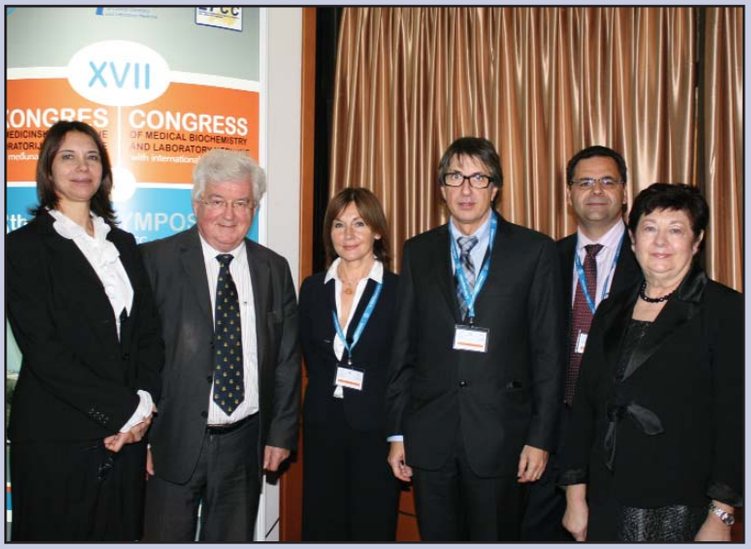

Photo: The Participants on 6th EFCC Symposium for Balkan Region, from left to right: S. Ignjatovic, V. Blaton, E. Piva, G. Da Rin, J-M Valid, N. Majkic-Singh

"Implementing Laboratory Automation, Quality and Efficiency" (Svetlana Ignjatovic and Nada Majkic-Singh), "Medical Errors: Preanalytical Issue in Patient Safety" (Mario Plebani), "Preanalytical Workstation as a Tool for Reducing Laboratory Errors" (Giorgio Da Rin), "Progressive Automation - the Solution of Choice for Improving Lab Efficiency" (Jan-Michel Valid), "Centralization, Consolidation and Automation in a Local Hospital Network" (Gerd Hafner), "Concepts for Lean Laboratory Organization" (Gabriele Halwachs-Baumann) and "Automation, Lean, Six Sigma - Synergy in Tactics to Improve Lab Efficiency" (Davide Villa), "Concepts for an In vitro Diagnostic Organization: Consulting Services to Develop Customized Economical and High Quality In Vitro Diagnostic Solutions" (Gerhard Wirl) and "Lean and Six Sigma Sample Analysis Process in a Microbiology Laboratory" (Vojislav Stoiljkovic).

The topics selected covered in a multidisciplinary fashion the field of laboratory medicine and other medical sciences. A number of experts in various areas actively took part by contributing their work, which further accentuated the multidisciplinary character of the Congress. Like in previous years, this Congress has made it possible for the latest scientific and expert results to be presented to clinical chemists from Serbia and the Balkan region and has served as a place for exchanging experiences in order to promote contemporary laboratory practice. During the closing ceremony, Prof. David Goldberg gave a very interesting and important lecture entitled "Science at the Crossroads: Fact or Fiction?" in which he examined the direction contemporary science took a while ago and offered some valuable advice.

Round table discussions on the topics presented served as the basis for reaching Conclusions and Guidelines in this area of laboratory medicine, with the aim of achieving the best possible treatment results for the benefit of patients. A permanent exhibition of equipment and reagents was on display during the Congress and Symposium. A number of companies organized well-attended high-quality scientific workshops.

Organization of the National 17th Serbian Congress of Medical Biochemistry and Laboratory Medicine and 6th EFCC Symposium for the Balkan region was the result of engagement and effort by the coordinators and all members of the Scientific and Organizing Committees. More than 450 participants from Serbia and other Balkan countries were actively engaged in the Congress and Symposium, and we can only hope that the program we had to offer met their expectations and that through such an exchange of experiences they were able to enrich their knowledge, which will doubtlessly be useful in everyday laboratory practice.

We also sincerely hope that Belgrade, our ancient city upon two rivers, was recognized as a kind and interesting host that the Congress participants will carry in their hearts for a long time.

All lectures are published in the national journal of the Society of Medical Biochemists of Serbia - Journal of Medical Biochemistry 2010; 29: 131-230, and 29: 231-492 (www.versita.com).

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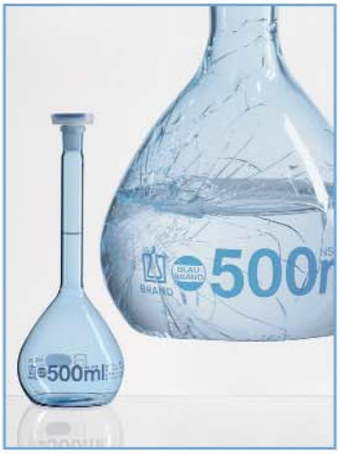

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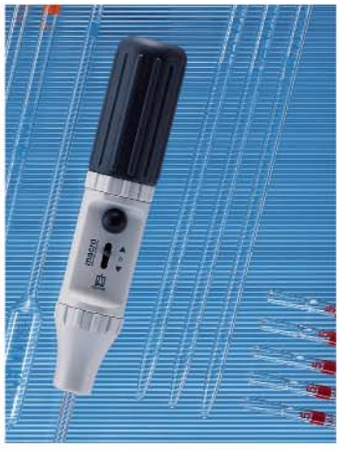

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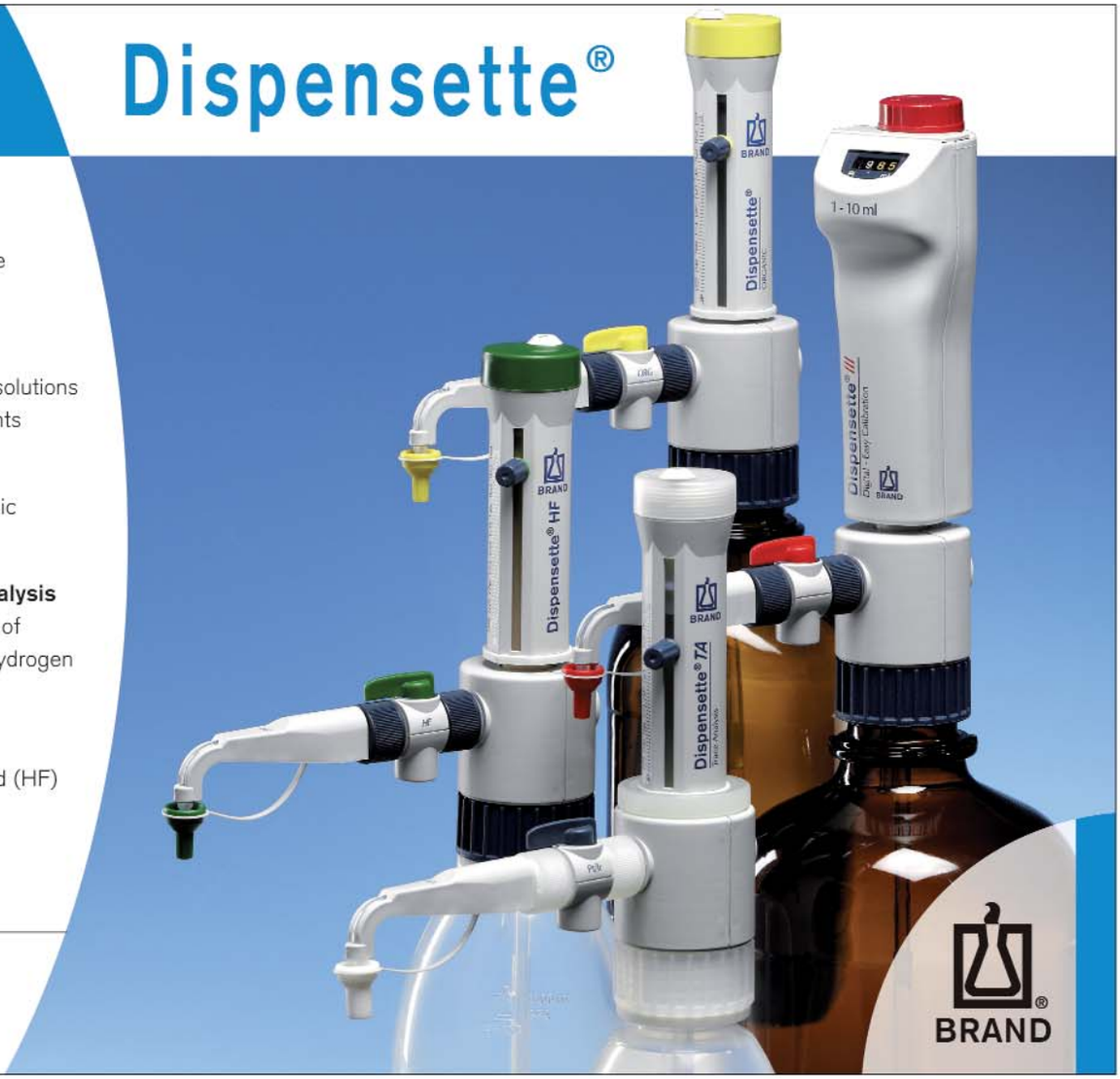

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Our profession Now Has a European Name: Specialist in Laboratory Medicine

by S. Zerah, Janet McMurray and A.R. Horvath

Why is the name so important?

In the era of "omics" and with the advancement of technology, everyday medical decisions are more and more influenced by medical laboratory data. Our profession is relatively young compared to other medical subspecialties. We come from different backgrounds (MDs, Pharmacists, Scientists) but whatever our background and whatever our specialties, we all work in Medical Laboratories.

When medical laboratories began to develop, each country used a different name for the profession. This is further complicated by the large variation of subspecialities practiced by medical laboratories in the different countries of Europe. Many of us are polyvalent, others are subspecialized, but in principle, we all practice the same profession.

Thus, it is not surprising that even in our own countries people outside the profession do not understand who specialists working in medical laboratories are and what exactly they do. EFCC is now an established European organization for the profession but except for ourselves, few know whom exactly we represent.

Let us be clear: If we confuse ourselves, consider how confusing it is for people we are in contact with, such as EU politicians, administrators, civil servants! We have to convince these people of our skills and expertise, and the reason we exist and we are needed. Two of EFCC's missions are to represent laboratory medicine at European level to political, professional, scientific, and other bodies, and to promote the profession in Europe (1). Therefore we need a common name to have a clear identity which best describes the scope of the work we carry out for the patients.

Established medical specialties have a name that everybody understands and knows. It describes who they are and what they do: e.g., gynecologist, cardiologist, radiologist, endocrinologist, etc. A clear and easily understood name which reflects the level of education and training of a specialist in the medical laboratory, and hence eligibility to be on the EC4 Register (2), is therefore needed.

History

For a profession made up of professionals from different backgrounds we need a name that all groups and all countries will accept. In many countries, names have been argued about for years and are jealously guarded.

The importance of finding a name for our profession has been discussed for years: at all national and European meetings, in Prague at the FESCC-UEMS meeting in 2004, in Warsaw at a European conference on education in laboratory medicine in March 2010, and in Lisbon at the 1st EFCC-UEMS joint conference in October 2010 where it was decided that a common European name must be chosen.

How to choose the right name for the profession?

As with any name, it must be: (a) acceptable to all, including those who specialize in different subspecialties within the profession, (b) short, clear, and easy to remember.

Proposal for the name of our profession in Europe

EFCC officers suggested many possible names that were vigorously discussed. The three preferred names were then sent to all EFCC National Societies for consideration, with an invitation to vote for their choice.

The result of the vote and the new European name: Of the 39 European member National Societies 28 (72%) have voted, eighteen (64%) of the votes cast were in favor of the name: SPECIALIST IN LABORATORY MEDICINE

We are most grateful to all who contributed to the discussion and to the National Societies for their interest and endorsement.

References

[1]*European Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (http://www.efcclm.eu).*

[2]*Zerah S, McMurray J, Hallworth M. et al. Guide to the European Register of Specialists in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine. Version 3-2010. Clin Chem Lab Med 2010;48(7):999-1008.*

European Session of the IFCC: Task Force for Young Scientists at the JIB 2010

By Damien Gruson, Chair IFCC-TFYS

The IFCC Task Force for Young Scientists (TF-YS) organized on November 4, 2010, a workshop entitled "Mapping the future of European Laboratory Medicine for Young Scientists" under the auspices of IFCC and EFCC. This workshop was held within the JIB (Journées Internationales de Biologie), one of the largest European Laboratory Medicine events taking place every year in November in Paris (France).

The TF-YS is focused on facilitating communication, education, and training among young scientists in the numerous IFCC member organizations. Through surveys, conferences, and one-on-one interactions, the IFCC TF-YS has identified a need for networking among young scientists globally in both industrialized and emerging nations.

The objective of the JIB's workshop was to facilitate communication and interaction between young scientists, to share experiences and challenges that laboratorians face around the world, and to make new contacts with colleagues. Different roundtables allowed young scientists and experts to discuss the process, perspectives, and principles of laboratory management and leadership for young scientists working around the world, to explain the major challenges that young scientists face globally, and to identify new contacts among other young laboratorians from around the world.

The session was started with the overview of the EFCC presented by Prof. Victor Blaton and with the introduction to IFCC missions by Bernard Gouget who reminded the audience of a sentence from Louis Pasteur fitting for the future of young scientists "in the field of observation, chance only favors the prepared mind." That morning session was composed of three main roundtables. The first one devoted to a clinical and critical vision of the lab med specialists by Prof. F. Verschuren and Dr. V. Costigliola. The second roundtable was focused on the training and competency testing of laboratory professionals and was presented by Prof. P. Wallemacq and Dr. C. McCudden. The third roundtable was dedicated to presenting and commenting on the different career perspectives for young scientists and allowed Dr. J.P. Lavigne, Dr. E. Cavalier, Dr. G. Ghafour, C. Tarrajat, T. Nenninger, and R. Berenger presented their current activities and the trends.

The session was also moderated by experts from IFCC, EFCC, and SFBC such as Graham Beastall, IFCC president, Simone Zerah, EFCC-EC4, chair, Philippe. Gambert, and Philmippe Gillery, SFBC president and past president.

Interactive events like this may help young scientists to learn about the changing laboratory environment and to prepare their future in a dynamic way. We can recall as a source of inspiration the key conclusions of the IFCC President G. Beastall: "Who dares wins."