

Continuous international network building to promote  
scientific publication:  
Scientific Summer School, Pezinok, Slovakia, May 25 – 30, 2008

*Bilimsel yayınların desteklenmesinde süreli uluslararası ağın kurulması:  
Bilimsel Yaz Okulu - Pezinok, Slovakia, Mayıs 25-30, 2008*

Since its very start in 2001, the Anatolian Journal of Cardiology systematically works on achieving its aim “to publish qualified, continual and original periodical on cardiology of international quality that will be supported by all cardiologists and investigators ... bringing forward the investigators from the national toward the international quality”.

The Anatolian Journal of Cardiology sees its role not only in publishing the scientific papers, but also in the active support for the authors. One of its activities in this specific area is the participation of the Journal in Scientific Summer School (SSS) - a joint initiative of three scientific Journals: the Journal of Electrocardiology, the Croatian Medical Journal and the Anatolian Journal of Cardiology. The Anatolian Journal of Cardiology entered this activity last year, when the Scientific Summer School was held in Istanbul – Silivri (1). Encouraged by the success of this Summer School in Turkey and willing to share the experience and expertise, Prof. Bilgin Timuralp, the Editor-in-Chief and Prof. Gulmira Kudaiberdieva, the Editor of the AJC, participated as members of the International Faculty at the Scientific Summer School in Pezinok Slovakia, May 25-30, 2008.

The Scientific Summer School is designed as a four-day workshop and provides an interdisciplinary international environment for training skills required for preparing research study protocols, scientific manuscript and international collaboration (2, 3). During four days, the participants experience a process of elaborating and presenting common research project. This process includes defining a research topic of common interest, selecting an adequate study design, selecting an adequate method of data collection, analysis and interpretation, and developing a feasible study plan and timeline for the project, including the preparation of a research paper. The program of the Summer School consists of four workshops and is based on the Research Practicum of the Duke University, Durham, NC, USA (4). It combines plenary and small group discussions, project development and class presentation, and discussion on publishing scientific papers with representatives of medical scientific journals. The last, but not least, the Summer School with its international arrangement, aims to encourage the participants (largely non-native speakers of English) to communicate in English.

This year, the Scientific Summer School was held at the Hotel Istota in a remote and quiet forest setting in a protected natural region close to Pezinok, Slovakia. The choice of the location allowed an intensive and undisturbed course of the busy and long hour schedule.

The international environment of SSS was arranged this year again, as the total number of twenty Summer School participants and faculty members represented seven countries from three continents. Along with the representatives of the AJC from Turkey, the International Faculty consisted of Assoc. Prof. Galen Wagner, MD, Duke University Medical Center, Durham, NC, USA, the Editor-in Chief of the Journal of Electrocardiology, Director of the Duke ECG Core Lab, the founding member of the International Society of Computerized Electrocardiography; Assoc. Prof. Ljuba Bacharova, MD, PhD, MBA, International Laser Center, Bratislava, Slovakia, the Executive Editor of the Journal of Electrocardiology, Secretary of the International Society of Electrocardiology; and Aleksandra Misak, MD, the English language translator and author's editor, affiliated with CMJ, Croatia. Other two faculty members were former Summer School participants Lubica Kovacicova, MD, PhD and Jana Kirchnerova, MSc from Slovakia. Thirteen Summer School participants of wide spectrum of professional interests and positions ranging from 25-year-old 1st year graduate student to 38-year-old head of a department, were from Slovakia, Czech Republic, Ukraine and Poland.

After the first evening introductory session, the participants formed four groups based on minor or greater overlaps in their professional background and their first and the most challenging task was to come up with their own idea for a scientific study. The idea was in the course of the following workshops turned into a feasible study plan presented at the last workshop. The groups addressed wide range of health issues and elaborated various study designs.

The Taylors, the group consisting of postgraduate students in both basic research and clinical research with interests in neurosurgery, pediatric oncology, molecular biology and endocrinology aimed to identify a possible criterion for future tailored therapy for glioblastoma patients. They designed an observational study “CD133 expression and GBM response to vincristine therapy” to determine the distribution of CD133 expression in the population of GBM patients and to determine its relation to the GBM vincristine chemosensitivity (Alica Dzurenkova

(Slovakia), Silvia Kelemenova, (Slovakia), Hana Kotalova, (Czech Republic), Vladimir Balik (Slovakia), Jana Kirchnerova (Slovakia faculty)).

The GARLIC group joined together cardiologists from pediatric intensive care and functional diagnostics to work out details of a study that would be helpful for elimination of unnecessary Warfarin therapy in patients with permanent atrial fibrillation. Their experimental study "Anticoagulation treatment strategy guided by TEE in patients with permanent atrial fibrillation" was designed to evaluate left atrium appendage flow velocity by transesophageal echocardiography as a method to identify patients with low-risk of thrombus formation and embolic events (Lucia Bordacova (Slovakia), Mykhaylo Ikorkin (Ukraine), Mykhaylo Sorokivsky (Ukraine), Galen Wagner (USA, faculty)).

Another group consisting of cardiologists specialised in pediatric intensive care and invasive cardiology was the SCAYA group. This group had the idea to differentiate a treatment strategy for ventricular tachycardia patients. They elaborated an observational study "Effects of therapy on rehospitalization/sudden death of patients after first ventricular tachycardia" to determine the incidence of rehospitalization because of arrhythmia or adverse effect/complication of treatment

(Zuzana Hrubsova (Slovakia), Monika Rozycka-Kosmalska (Poland), Michal Dziuba (Poland), Aleksandra Misak (Croatia, faculty), Bilgin Timuralp (Turkey, faculty)).

Pharmacology, public health and epidemiology researchers teamed up in the MSEDU group and tackled a relevant public health issue, the metabolic syndrome. With the aim to design a targeted public health intervention, they designed an observational cross-sectional study to find the association between metabolic syndrome and education level, titled "Is the prevalence of metabolic syndrome (MS) related to education?"

(Tatiana Foltanova (Slovakia), Lucia Hrivniakova (Slovakia), Jana Kollarova (Slovakia), Gulmira Kudaiberdieva (Turkey, faculty), Lubica Kovacikova (Slovakia, faculty)).

Having the experience of organizing the two Summer Schools before and being open to new approaches to make the training even more beneficial for the participants, this year, the third SSS, we took advantage of the high faculty to participants ratio and shifted the workshop scheme. One or two faculty members were assigned to facilitate discussions in the individual groups



**Figure 1.** The participants of the Scientific Summer School in Slovakia, 2008. The first row from left to right: Silvia Kelemenová (Slovakia), Mykhaylo Ikorkin (Ukraine), Mykhaylo Sorokivskyy (Ukraine), Alica Dzurenková (Slovakia). The second row: Hana Kotalová (Czech Republic), Monika Rózycka-Kosmalska (Poland), Lucia Bordácová (Slovakia), Tatiana Foltánová (Slovakia), Zuzana Hrubsová (Slovakia), Lucia Hrivniaková (Slovakia), Lubica Kováčiková (Slovakia), Ljuba Bachárová (Slovakia), Jana Kirchnerová (Slovakia), Marilyn Wagner (USA), Jana Kollárová (Slovakia), Aleksandra Misak (Croatia), Vladimir Balik (Slovakia). (Missing: Michal Dziuba (Poland), Bilgin and Gökhan Timuralp (Turkey), Gulmira Kudaiberdieva (Turkey), Galen Wagner (USA))

allowing closer contact of the participants with faculty members to be maintained also during small group discussions. This approach of deeper faculty involvement in the group project preparation required the faculty members to distance themselves to refrain from supervising position and to give a balanced feedback to group members instead.

Besides the study design workshops, also workshops specialized on scientific publication, how to handle reviewers' comments, medical journals and books and building network were led by the faculty members. Especially the first workshop emphasizing that preparation of a manuscript of a scientific publication begins already in the phase of study preparation worked remarkably well and the idea became a leitmotif of this year's Summer School.

With the aim to share the know-how of transferring the need of research education into university and journal policies, to share the experience from the previous Summer Schools, and to initiate future collaboration in dissemination of this activity, faculty members also delivered a lecture and attended a panel discussion "Promotion of scientific publication from the perspectives of legislation, universities and scientific journals" held at the Medical Faculty of Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia.

Just as at any other school a field-trip - a well-deserved treat after the four day hard work was organized to let the participants experience the host country Slovakia outside the hotel facility. The participants visited two places to get the feel of the historical importance and to see the local folk craftsmanship and traditions of the Small Carpathy region.

First, the participants visited the Cerveny Kamen castle, one of the best-preserved medieval fortifications in Slovakia that were built for defense of western border of Hungarian Empire in 13th century. Today its interiors house a unique collection of furniture and accessories documenting the lifestyle of the nobility, and the restored fortification system and huge storage areas in the cellars make the castle a unique example of Central European architecture.

Participants also had the opportunity to visit Majolika, Modra, a pottery manufacture producing the hand-crafted and hand-painted faience decorated with traditional floral motives of blue, green, yellow and manganese red color.



**Figure 2.** The final GARLIC group project presentation. Mykhaylo Ikorkin delivering the presentation, Lucia Bordácová, Gökhan Timuralp and Galen Wagner carefully listening and Mykhaylo Sorokivskyy handling the computer presentation

## Conclusion

The three-year experience with the Scientific Summer Schools in different countries (Slovakia 2006 and 2008, Turkey 2007, Macedonia 2008) shows that the problem-oriented workshop-based education, used as a regular teaching method at Duke University, NC, USA, is transferable into the European environment. The international composition of both faculty and participants enriches the discussions by different perspectives and experience, and the same is true for the contribution of interdisciplinary composition of groups. The reflections of the Summer School in Pezinok participants shared in the round-table discussion after the last workshop could provide some insight into the atmosphere of the workshop:

- No one will believe how much hard work we have done over the 4 days at the summer school (Jana, Slovakia)
- I suggest another summer school focused on statistics to be organized (Vlado, Slovakia)
- Now I will have to rearrange my whole PhD thesis (Michal, Poland)
- I appreciate that the pencil eraser and pencil sharpener were included in the packages, I've used a half of my pencil on rephrasing the statements in the workshop protocols (Zuzana, Slovakia)
- I've learned new English vocabulary and used in practice (Monika, Poland)
- I've just experienced the opposite of lectures (Hanka, Czech Republic)
- I've learned how big part of a paper can be written before the actual experiments and what building blocs of a paper the reviewers search for in manuscript (Silvia, Slovakia)
- I've enjoyed and the combination of basic and clinical research approach a found it helpful (Silvia, Slovakia)
- I've learned that it is important to focus on one idea (Alica, Slovakia)

• The combination of team members with background in different fields taught me to listen to unexpected questions (Tana, Slovakia)

• Statistics is just a tool that you learn by doing it (Tana, Slovakia)

• I'm amazed that over 4 days we were able to come up with an idea and work it through to turn it into a detailed study plan (Lucia, Slovakia)

• I've learned much new information (Mykhaylo, Ukraine)

• I've realized how important it is to look both forward and backward when designing a study and to revise details previously stated to match with new details (Lucia, Slovakia)

• I've learned that simpler doesn't mean worse (Lucia, Slovakia)

• We should do the Summer School again in Ukraine (Mykhaylo, Ukraine)

The international faculty and the Journals involved-Journal of Electrocardiology, Anatolian Journal of Cardiology and the Croatian Medical Journal, are aware that achieving their aim to encourage the researcher to publish and to assist them in the improvement of the manuscript quality - to introduce the "publishing culture" - is a long distance run. However, the first "tangible" outcome from the Summer Schools has already emerged - the first paper was published the idea of which was developed and further discussed during the Summer School in Slovakia in 2006 (5).

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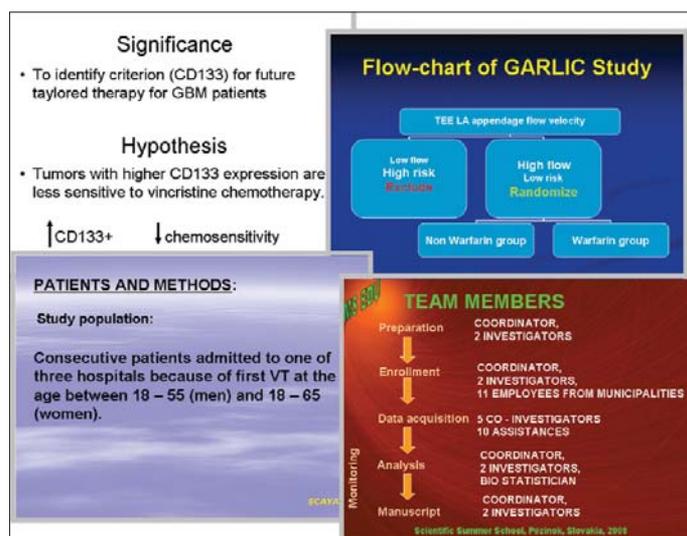
### Figure acknowledgment:

Picture 1 was kindly provided by Michal Dziuba

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**Figure 3. Group project presentations. The collage of selected slides of the Taylors, GARLIC, SCAYA and MS EDU (from up down) group project presentations representing several of many issues of a study plan discussed at the Summer School**