

## Report from the President of SFRR-Europe

Dear Members of the Society of Free Radical Research Europe,

You kindly elected me as President-Elect, and after holding that position in 2007 and 2008, I started as President of our Society early in 2009.

I stand on the shoulders of giants. Looking back in time, these were the people who founded the Society at a time when it was considered the utmost stupidity to even think that free radicals had any relevance in biology. The historical note on our website tells more about the start of our Society. This difficult start is easily forgotten, now that nitric oxide is established as a critical biological mediator, and certainly a factor in the pathogenesis of common and serious diseases such as arteriosclerosis and degenerative CNS conditions. However, this history is fundamental, and a critical frame of reference in the development of our science. To me, this is a task of high priority, as if we do not take positive steps to preserve our history it may all too easily be lost.

My predecessor as President, Malcolm Jackson from Liverpool, made my transition into this Office very easy. He managed the Society efficiently and with great competence, and has been researching continuously in the free radical field even from before our Society was established. Just look at the photo from the inaugural meeting of the Society at The Royal Institution, London on 9 July 1982 ([http://www.sfrr-europe.org/my\\_documents/my\\_files/1982.jpg](http://www.sfrr-europe.org/my_documents/my_files/1982.jpg)). Malcolm has told me that the original notes of this meeting are in existence and probably can be made available.

The secretary and the treasurer do much of the daily work in the Society for Free Radical Research-Europe. I'd like to thank the previous treasurer, Joe Lunec, for his work, and also especially Nesrin Kartal Ozer, Istanbul, for her very dedicated contribution to the Society during a long period, particularly as secretary for the Society. Corinne Spickett has now taken on the responsibility of treasurer and has in the short time been very efficient; good progress has been made in updating financial arrangements and implementing new procedures. Helen Griffiths has accepted the task

of secretary, and has already worked hard on updating our website with a new design and facilities such as electronic registration of new members, and abstract submission.

The Society is in fine shape. We are building a closer and closer relationship with our official journal, Free Radical Research; a relationship that will be to the benefit of the Society as well as the Journal. This process will take some time to optimize, and to facilitate it a Publications Committee has been formed. Malcolm Jackson is very instrumental in this committee, and with his excellent diplomatic skills you can all rest assured that the relationship between the Journal and the Society will be strong and positive. I firmly believe that this is necessary and beneficial, and we can all be happy about this development. As you can see from the cover of the Journal, it is now also the official journal for the Society for Free Radical Research-Asia. This is a new and exciting development, and the future holds great promise for a mutual, beneficial development of our official journal.

In the committee, we focus strongly on young investigators: we have the Spetses Free Radical Summer School, Young Investigator Awards and Special Sessions for Young Investigators at the annual scientific meetings, and as well as the Catherine Pasquier Award. It is my sincere hope that we can expand the tradition with poster presentations and awards, and build a stronger structure for a true scientific market where interactions and ideas can exchange freely.

The biannual Free Radical Summer School at Spetses in Greece continues on excellent track, and the next meeting will be in 2010, June 4–10, with the title "Protein maintenance and turnover in ageing and diseases". Stathis Gonos is acting as local organizer and is supported by Tilman Grune; they are also our Meetings Officers. The number of students is expected to exceed 80, as it has the previous years, and the School will be able to offer financial support, in the shape of travel bursaries, to a substantial number of those students who are successful in their application for a place. I am sure that this Summer School will be as successful as the previous ones, with fruitful

interactions between students and professors. The 2012 Summer School is already on track: Dimitri Galaris and Lars Olivier Klotz have accepted the invitation to organise a School with the title “Free Radicals, gene expression and physiology”.

The Catherine Pasquier Award 2009 was presented to Consuelo Borrás from Valencia, Spain. Our Society calls for proposals each year, and a subcommittee is set up by the President-elect, which studies the recommendation letter needed from a senior member of the Society and performs a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of each candidate, before a winner is declared. Consuelo Borrás delivered a magnificent lecture on the molecular mechanisms underlying why females live longer than males. She provided clear evidence for the importance of estrogens and phytoestrogens in the upregulation of antioxidant longevity-related genes, and showed that estrogens also activate the expression of Mn-SOD and GPx by the MAPK and NFκB pathways. The 2007 winner was also a woman, so from this and other observations I dare draw the conclusion that our Society does not need any special quota systems to promote research by women. The women in our Society can easily achieve an equal representation based on the quality of their research.

The annual conferences of our Society are very important scientific events. This year's meeting in Rome I'll report on briefly later. The next meeting will be in Oslo, September 12–15; 2010; it is organised by Andrew Collins and includes a joint day with the European Mutagen Society annual meeting (organized by Gunnar Brunborg) with the topic “DNA Repair”. It is my sincere hope that many will take this unique opportunity to visit the Northern part of Europe and experience Norwegian hospitality, the beautiful mountains in Norway, and the long bright summer nights. Our 2011 Conference will be held in Istanbul and organized by Nesrin Kartal Ozer. In 2012 there will be a joint meeting with the International Society, which will take place in London and will be organized by Giovanni Mann. Currently, we are expecting that the 2013 conference will be in Paris, to be organized by Bertrand Friguet. We look forward to these future meetings: to great science, and meetings with old and new friends and fellow scientists.

The annual conferences have evolved with some repeated events that include the Catherine Pasquier Award, awards to young scientists, the Informa Lecture

and the SFRR Lecture. In this way the Society promotes a young scientist who is not yet fully established, brings in a top scientist from an adjacent area that could cross-fertilize with free radical research, and acknowledges a senior researcher with a fine track record who can present the achievements of decades of dedicated free radical research. In the Committee, we believe that free radical mechanisms are important in many disciplines, including chemistry, biochemistry, clinical biochemistry, physiology, pathology, toxicology, plant physiology and also areas such as polymer chemistry and development of new materials and products. We should be aware and learn from the developments in such fields.

The latest SFRR-Europe meeting in Rome was organised to perfection by University of Rome “Foro Italico” with the organization directed by Daniela Caporossi. On behalf of the Society I would like to thank IUSM Rector Paolo Parisi, Daniela Caporossi and her co-organizers for providing such an excellent program, and for the extremely smooth operation of the conference. They have set a high standard for the organization of our meetings. I'd also like to thank the COST B35 Action headed by Neven Zarkovic for integrating with the Rome meeting 2009. I'll not report at length on the Informa Lecture by Alberto Boveris or the SFRR Lecture by Sten Orrenius, as any attempt to summarize such excellent lectures will just be a faded and distorted image. Suffice it to say that the science was excellent and their presentations were enjoyed very much by all of us.

I'll end with the beginning, the opening lecture by Nobel Laureate Luc Montagnier, who received the Prize for his work on HIV as the infectious agent in AIDS. Infections with HIV and many other agents are among the most important causes for human disease, disability and suffering. I take it as a token of the importance of the research interest of our Society that such a prominent researcher takes an interest in free radical research and acknowledges the importance of free radicals and reactive oxygen species in human disease. In my view this, together with the large number of young scientists who attended the Rome meeting holds great promise for the future of SFRR-Europe.

Looking forward to seeing you again in Oslo 2010.

*Henrik E. Poulsen MD  
President of SFRR-Europe*

This paper was first published online on Early Online on 26 October 2009.