

Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis and Vascular Biology

From the Editor

Judith Andersen, MD

Participants in the 76th Annual Scientific Sessions of the American Heart Association held Nov. 8–11 in Orlando found an enormous trove of scientific and clinical data as well as inspirational lectures, practical advice and a spectacular array of pharmaceutical, device, and literature exhibits. They also discovered that ATVB Council members figured prominently among awardees, special lecture speakers, plenary session presenters, press conference discussants and motivational speakers for special sessions on cardiovascular science and medicine trainees.

Awarded the American Heart Association’s Basic Research Prize during the meeting’s opening session were Shaun R. Coughlin, MD, PhD, and David Ginsburg, MD, for their axis-shifting contributions to the fields of vascular biology and coagulation. Dr Coughlin, professor of medicine, Cellular and Molecular Pharmacology and director of the Cardiovascular Research Institute at the University of California, San Francisco, described the thrombin receptor, the first (PAR-1) of a family of Protease Activated Receptors responsible for triggering signaling pathways in cells responsible for initiating and propagating intravascular coagulation. In this and

subsequent bodies of work, he shifted developmental therapeutics toward molecular targeting of specific signaling molecules and pathways, with the promise of enhanced efficacy without nonspecific toxicity.

Dr Ginsberg, whose contribution to vascular biology and coagulation medicine began with the cloning of the von Willebrand factor gene in 1984, was recognized for that and many subsequent projects that revealed the implications of single and combined coagulation protein deficiencies in transgenic animal models, as well as those produced by deficiency or dysfunction in intracellular processing mechanisms and control of tissue specific expression mechanisms. He is the James V. Neel Distinguished Professor of Medicine and Human Genetics at the University of Michigan. In an intensively competitive and fast-moving research environment, both investigators are recognized for their generous support of younger investigators and their effective collaborations with other laboratories in the United States and abroad.

The Russell Ross Memorial Lecture, “Flow-mediated Atheroprotective Mechanisms,” was delivered by Dr Bradford



Bradford C. Berk



Godfrey S. Getz



Yale Nemerson



Robert J. Lefkowitz

C. Berk, director of the Center for Cardiovascular Research at the University of Rochester. Dr Godfrey S. Getz of the Department of Pathology at the University of Chicago, gave the George Lyman Duff Memorial Lecture discussing the question, "Is There More Than One Pathway to Atherosclerosis?" "Tissue Factor: From Brain Soup to Crystal Structure" was the title of the Sol Sherry Distinguished Lecture given by Dr Yale Nemerson, Mt. Sinai Medical Center, New York. "Seven-Membrane Spanning Receptors and Their Regulators," a discussion of the biology of G-proteins, was the topic of the Thomas W. Smith Memorial Lecture, given by Dr Robert J. Lefkowitz, Howard Hughes Investigator and Professor of Medicine and Biochemistry at Duke University.

In a highlighted basic science session on "Antioxidative Mechanisms," Dr David Harrison delivered an excellent State-of-the-Art Lecture describing previously undescribed mechanisms of control of vascular reactivity by reactive oxygen species.

Judah Folkman, MD, Professor of Surgery at Harvard Medical School and Boston Children's Hospital, and initiator of the laboratory investigation of angiogenesis and its control, was a central participant in several meeting activities, not least important of which was his discussion with early career investigators at the Early Career Development Networking Luncheon. Long an energetic educator of medical students, residents, fellows and postdoctoral scientists in his own laboratory, Dr Folkman provided advice and encouragement to beginning cardiologists and vascular biologists attempting to plot their own career trajectories.

Clinical trials of interest to Council members were presented in both Plenary and Special Sessions. Trials included such studies as "SPORTIF V," which compares an oral thrombin inhibitor prodrug to warfarin in atrial fibrillation, supporting the value and relative safety of this novel oral agent which is converted by hepatic esterases and N-reductases to the active thrombin inhibitor, melagatran. The prodrug apparently requires no laboratory monitoring of therapeutic efficacy and no dose adjustment. These properties coupled with reduced

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drug appear very desirable, especially for use in geriatric patients. "REVERSAL," a randomized comparison of efficacy in reversing the progression of coronary atherosclerosis, established atorvastatin's superiority to pravastatin, a somewhat surprising result attributable to atorvastatin's more pronounced effect on both HDL and triglyceride levels. Many additional studies explored the relative efficacies of various anticoagulant regimens in acute coronary syndromes, arterial thrombosis and peripheral arterial disease.

Upcoming is the 5th Annual Conference on Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis and Vascular Biology to be held on May 6-8, 2004, at the San Francisco Hilton. The abstract submission deadline has passed, but the advance registration deadline is April 16, 2004. Additional information on program outline and objectives, awards, and housing information are available on the AHA Web site, Conferences and Events, Current Conferences or by e-mail at: scientificconferences@heart.org.