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JOURNAL DE LA SOCIÉTÉ FRANÇAISE
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Tél. : 33 (0)1 46 38 24 14 - Fax : 33 (0)1 40 95 72 15

Editeur/Publisher

PRINCEPS Editions

Impression/Printing

Barnéoud, Bonchamp-lès-Laval, n° 803045.

Parasite succède aux Annales de Parasitologie humaine et comparée fondées en 1923 par E. Brumpt, M. Langeron et M. Neveu-Lemaire.

Parasite, 2008, 15, 3, 185-528

Publication trimestrielle/Published quarterly

Dépôt légal : septembre 2008

n° ISSN : 1252-607X

n° Commission paritaire : 1111T81017

FOREWORD

This special issue of *PARASITE* – Journal of the French Society of Parasitology – contains original minireviews written by recognized specialists covering recent advances in the field of parasitology research. The issue, which publishes the keynote lectures given at the Xth European Multicolloquium of Parasitology (EMOP-10, Paris, August 24-28, 2008), displays a large view of the present state of parasitological researches. Indeed, EMOP-10 provides an unparalleled opportunity to get a comprehensive view of diverse research trends in the field.

The contributions summarize the latest advances on the knowledge of cell biology of eukaryotic pathogens, host parasite interactions, genome, genetic diversity, population genetics, and typing strategies to approach taxonomy, phylogeny and parasite-host coevolution. Innovative strategies of control and prevention are also treated in this volume as well as topics focusing on bioethics, epistemology and history of parasitology.

The EMOP-10 Scientific Committee has proposed a first list of symposia, each one including keynote papers and communications in order to ensure that topics of “general” or basic parasitology (including, for instance, parasites of invertebrates and plants) be adequately represented. Thus, among the 55 keynote lectures published in the present issue, 38 % deal with basic parasitology. Likewise, among the 710 oral or poster communications presented during the EMOP-10 meeting, about 40 % dealt with basic biology issues or with protozoan or metazoan parasites of wild vertebrates or invertebrates from Old or New World areas. Interestingly, an unusually high number of works targeted parasites of ectothermic vertebrates.

Parasitology emerges thus as a dynamic transdisciplinary field of research that extends beyond medical or veterinary perspectives. Actually, beyond health or economic impact of parasite organisms, research focusing mainly on cell or molecular biology, parasitism ecology, host-parasite relationships, molecular taxonomy, phylogeny and phylogeography was surely a significant trend of contributions submitted to the EMOP-10 meeting.

Parasitology, as a biological discipline, materialises at best the idea that medical or veterinary research should not be opposed to basic biology approaches. The ability of parasites to succeed as pathogenic agents seems to depend to a large extent upon their life history traits, ecology, genetic background and ultimately upon their evolution (Hugot *et al.*, 2004). Therefore, without accurate identification of hosts, reservoir, critical ecological issues (Morand *et al.*, 2006), and factors involved in parasite circulation in the environment, it is usually

impossible to understand comprehensively parasitic diseases. However, a kind of invisible barrier seems to exist between medical research, including epidemiology, on one hand, and basic or fundamental biology, including ecology, phylogenetics, population genetics and taxonomy, on the other (Hugot *et al.*, 2004).

Furthermore, opposition is also frequent between laboratory or bench scientists and field researchers. Indeed, the history of science as well as recent developments of molecular epidemiology or taxonomy clearly show that a thorough understanding of infectious diseases needs multiple approaches (Tibayrenc, 2002). For instance, recent progresses in the understanding of the epidemiology of emergent parasitic or fungal diseases resulted mainly from the molecular characterisation of parasites sampled from patients, animal hosts or environment. New knowledge on the biology of parasites and resulting diseases stems from a permanent flow of data and ideas coming from diverse fields of research, including dynamics of host-parasite association as inferred from mathematical epidemiology (Anderson & May, 1991).

The broad scope of contributions (both keynote lectures and communications) welcomed at the EMOP-10 meeting is clearly attesting of the current developments of parasitological research. Above all, the multidisciplinary character of EMOP-10 provided an unparalleled opportunity of common analysis and debate (unfortunately unusual in conventional scientific meetings) among specialists, including

scientists, bioethicists, philosophers and historians of sciences.

Eduardo Dei-Cas, Jean Dupouy-Camet***

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