Update on Journal and ISBER Activities in China

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RECENTLY I (J.V.) VISITED Shanghai and Changsha, China, for a conference and several other activities related to *Biopreservation and Biobanking* and ISBER. First, I was honored, along with ISBER President Zisis Kozlakidis, President-elect David Lewandowski, Andrew Brooks, and others to attend and make presentations at the Biobank Branch, China Medicinal Biotech Association (BBCMBA) conference in Shanghai from March 29 to 31. This was a special 10th anniversary celebration of BBCMBA, attracting wide participation from the Chinese biobanking community and hosted by Professor Hengjun Gao, Head of BBCMBA.

More recently, as detailed in an ISBER press release on April 20, ISBER and BBCMBA entered into an affiliation agreement that highlights several joint initiatives:

“The International Society for Biological and Environmental Repositories (ISBER) is pleased to announce the signature of an Affiliate Agreement with the Biobank Branch, China Medicinal Biotech Association (BBCMBA).

The field of biobanking is expanding globally as it provides the foundation upon which vital medical, environmental, and pharmaceutical research takes place. The release of the ISBER Best Practices 4th Edition will introduce further standardization of the field and boost professionalism,” said Dr. Zisis Kozlakidis, President of ISBER. “We are delighted that ISBER is collaborating with a strong association in China. Working together, BBCMBA and ISBER will provide guidance and support to biobanks nationally and internationally.

The agreement will facilitate formal regular communication between ISBER and BBCMBA leadership, allowing for increased partnership opportunities and ties to the sizeable biobanking community in China. ISBER and BBCMBA will collaborate to produce a Chinese translation of the ISBER Best Practices: Recommendations for Repositories, 4th Edition, and work together towards a successful 20th Anniversary ISBER Annual Meeting, taking place May 7–10, 2019 in Shanghai.

BBCMBA has achieved its objectives through a methodical effort within China. BBCMBA has also recognized the importance of seizing any opportunities for international collaboration. With a focus on collaboration with ISBER over the past years, BBCMBA has launched initiatives to translate the ISBER Best Practices since 2012. In addition, BBCMBA has encouraged Chinese biobankers to participate in the ISBER annual conferences. It has been very successful in increasing the number of Chinese participants in the ISBER annual conference and raising awareness of ISBER,” said Professor Hengjun Gao, Head of BBCMBA.

In addition, ISBER and BBCMBA will collaborate on the common goal of introducing the ISBER Proficiency Testing for Biobanks into China and investigate the feasibility for joint ISBER/BBCMBA workshops and/or meetings in the future.

The agreement highlights the opportunity for us to share knowledge and consensus around best practices, and reconcile any differences,” continued Professor Gao. “BBCMBA will further refine its training program by merging valuable elements of the ISBER Best Practices. BBCMBA has launched two other initiatives to expand its enhancement of practice: inspection program of on-site practice and validation program of quality compliance across biobanks. We hope, with this joint effort, we can tap into best practices in China and open to others when needed. We are delighted to have the ISBER 2019 annual conference be held in China. BBCMBA would make all efforts to help in ensuring a successful ISBER conference in the upcoming year.”

After the BBCMBA conference, Zisis Kozlakidis and I traveled to Changsha, where we are both guest professors at Central South University. Our primary purpose for the visit was to start planning for a biobanking and cryobiology course that will be offered in the fall this year. We outlined the course topics, along with our host, Prof. Jufang Huang, into a series of about 18 lectures. We will be joined in presenting the lectures by Paul Slowey of Oasis Diagnostics, as well as a series of other guest lecturers from the university and elsewhere in China.

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Our visit to Changsha coincided with the Ching Ming Festival, also known as Tomb Sweeping Day or Mourning Day. This festival is a celebration of ancestors and many people travel to their hometowns to honor their deceased relatives. Zisis and I were also honored, as part of the holiday, to join in a ceremony at the university to honor those who donate their bodies to medical research.

We also gave presentations to students and faculty members, with Zisis giving a lecture concerning biobanking practices and standards, including the recently published Fourth Edition of the ISBER Best Practices. I was asked to give a presentation about writing and publishing articles in English language journals. It was very helpful that *Biopreservation and Banking's* publisher, Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., has published Guidelines for Writing a Research Paper for Publication in 10 languages, including Chinese (Mandarin). There was a lot of interest among the students concerning the details of writing and sub-

mitting articles. It is noteworthy that articles from China are now among the top three in number of submissions to the journal annually.

As I noted in the February Editorial, we have a number of special journal issues in the publication pipeline. Among these will be a special issue of articles from China, primarily from among the presentations at the Annual Biobank China meeting in Changsha last November. I expect this special issue to be published later in 2018.

And finally, during the BBCMBA meeting and in Changsha, Zisis and I had the opportunity to show a slide highlighting the upcoming 20th anniversary ISBER meeting, to be held in Shanghai in May 2019. We hope to see many of you there!

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