

ISEH January 2019 – Message from the President: Bertie Gottgens

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ISEH Headquarters

January 10, 2019



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

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I write this message to you in the last few days of December, reflecting on the past year and pondering the year ahead. Looking back at 2018, a real highlight for me was the 47th annual meeting of the ISEH in LA. As I see it, our research field of experimental haematology is going through a sustained period of positive growth and momentum. It is pleasing therefore to see that the ISEH meeting is doing such a fabulous job at capturing this sense of excitement, ranging from breakthroughs in our understanding of the fundamental principles that control blood development, all the way to achieving real clinical impact from the application of new technologies and harnessing the underlying biology.

I firmly believe that one of the main reasons behind ISEH's ability to capture the excitement in our field is the strong emphasis on, and contribution from, our junior members. I am delighted to see the continued enthusiasm emanating from our junior investigator committee. Indeed, when the committee needed to fill two vacancies last month, over 30 interested candidates applied. As a society, we are really fortunate to have fostered such a strong base of early career researchers wanting to be engaged. One of our key goals therefore has to be on finding ways to expand the range of opportunities for junior members to volunteer and support the society.

I also want to say a big thank you to a number of people for their contributions in 2018. To my two predecessors Hanna Mikkola and Timm Schroeder, as well as the next two future presidents Emmanuelle Passegué and Patricia Ernst. Real and dedicated teamwork is how I have experienced our working together, in the run-up, during and follow-up of our monthly Executive Committee teleconferences. Enormous thanks must go to our treasurer Sarah Ellis, who has worked tirelessly with the finance and executive committees to ensure that our financial position remains healthy at all times. I also want to thank everyone of you who gives up your precious time to work on ISEH committees and initiatives, and I know that everybody involved with the running of the ISEH will want to join me in expressing our gratitude to Katie Strang from the Chicago office of Smith Bucklin, the association management company that ISEH is partnering with. Katie's positive attitude and constant willingness to "go the extra mile" mean a lot to the success of ISEH, and I am delighted to have Katie as our Executive Director going into 2019.

One key aspect that sets the ISEH apart from other scientific societies in our field is our global outlook and international inclusivity. This is evidenced by the locations of our annual meeting, with Brisbane in 2019, New York in 2020, and advanced discussions to go for the first time to China in one of the following years. While such a global reach cannot be achieved by more geographically restricted societies such as the American Society of Hematology or European Hematology Association; for ISEH it also comes with the challenge

of maintaining a sense of community over the years, when the annual get-together commonly involves long-haul travelling. The society leadership therefore pays attention by choosing locations that are attractive travel destinations in their own right. We will also strive to maintain the high level of travel awards, where for our last meeting in LA almost 50% of all travel award applicants were successful. We also provided an uplift to applicants from developing nations, to increase their chances of attending the meeting and becoming an integral part of our community as we go forward.

Looking ahead into 2019, one thing that I am certain about is that the 48th ISEH meeting in Brisbane (August 22-25) will yet again deliver a stellar scientific program. Moreover, our Australian hosts assured me of fine weather in late August in Brisbane, with the Gold Coast and Great Barrier Reef not too far away for some relaxation before or after the conference. I am looking forward to reconnecting with as many of you as possible in Brisbane, and I hope that the meeting can serve as a vehicle to introduce our society to many new attendees from Australasia. I also want to remind you all that our journal *Experimental Hematology* constitutes a core asset of the society, which requires all of our support. Connie Eaves is doing a sterling job in her stewardship as Editor-in-Chief of the journal, with amazingly short turnaround times from initial submission to first decision, and a real drive that is centred on scientific quality. I therefore urge you to recognize the journal both by considering it as a home for your own research, and by acknowledging the good work published there by others through citations.

I want to close this message with an anecdote from the 2017 ISEH meeting in Frankfurt. Henry Lee-Six, a PhD student from the Sanger Institute just outside Cambridge in the UK, had his submitted abstract chosen for oral presentation in the opening plenary session. A perhaps daunting, but also not an atypical opportunity for PhD students at ISEH meetings. I remember that Henry's presentation on tracking haematopoietic stem cell clones during normal human haematopoiesis made a big impact at the time, because of the sheer ambition of the project and also the new and unique insights that were emerging. Henry's study was published three months ago in *Nature* (Lee-Six et al "Population dynamics of normal human blood inferred from somatic mutations"). For those who attended the Frankfurt meeting therefore, a real case of "you heard it here first", over 12 months before it appeared in *Nature*!

I wish you all the best for 2019, and hope to see you in Brisbane in August.