

# ISEH July 2019 – Message from the President: Bertie Gottgens

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ISEH Headquarters

July 4, 2019



*Former ISEH President Elaine Dzierzak asking a question at the EHA-ISEH session in Amsterdam*

Dear ISEH Friends and Colleagues,

**Bertie Gottgens DPhil, FMedSci**

Professor of Molecular Haematology

Cambridge University Department of Haematology

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This is my final president's message before I will be stepping down at the end of the ISEH Annual Meeting in August in Brisbane. It has been a real privilege to work on your behalf, with invaluable support from enthusiastic volunteers from right across the globe as well as our dedicated team at SmithBucklin in Chicago. We are fortunate to see exciting

breakthroughs in our field on an almost weekly basis, where ground-breaking discoveries in basic research go hand-in-hand with the development of exciting new therapies. Such breakthroughs critically depend on a vibrant research community, and I believe that we can all be proud of the important contributions that the ISEH has made over the last nearly 50 years to foster exactly this.

I am happy to provide you all with an update on the developing partnership between ISEH and the European Hematology Association (EHA). Over 12,000 delegates attended the annual EHA meeting in June in Amsterdam, which included a packed-out joint EHA-ISEH session on the ageing blood system, with excellent presentations from George Vassiliou and Emmanuelle Passegué. I am already looking forward to the reciprocal ISEH-EHA session at our Brisbane meeting, with talks from Timm Schroeder and Tony Green, which will be co-chaired by myself and John Gribben, the current president of EHA. While plans to continue these joint sessions at our meetings next year are already at an advanced stage, our goal going forward is to build further on the complementary strengths of the two societies. Any suggestions on additional joint future activities are therefore very much welcome.

Just like our best blood stem cells are characterised by their vigorous self-renewal capacity, the health of the ISEH critically depends on a regular turnover, with new members willing to serve as volunteers. I am very happy to report therefore that our call for new volunteers was met with a very positive response, with many more people putting their names forward than there were vacant committee positions. Please keep up this level of engagement, and remember, whilst you are not actively serving on a committee, you are a reserve critical for the society's overall health – a bit like the dormant blood stem cells in our blood system!

At the leadership level, I am very happy to pass on the baton to Emmanuelle Passegué, who I am certain will provide energetic leadership for the coming year, culminating with the 2020 meeting on her home turf in New York. Our current vice president Patricia Ernst is already working hard with the 2020 scientific program committee to develop yet another stellar line-up of speakers, and I am sure would welcome any suggestions you may have in terms of exciting topics. I also want to say a big thank you to Hanna Mikkola, who will rotate off the executive committee this summer. As my immediate predecessor, Hanna has been an invaluable source of advice, not just during my year as president, but also during the two years prior to that.

I want to finish by welcoming Andrew Elefanty from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (Melbourne, Australia) as our new incoming Vice President. Andrew has an internationally leading track record in our field, has held leadership positions in ISEH as well as other societies, and is a long standing supporter of the ISEH. For ISEH to be a truly international society, I believe it to be vital that scientists from outside of North America and Europe take on leadership positions. I am sure that having Andrew on board will be very helpful in allowing the society to broaden its horizons, and look forward to continuing strong

engagement with Australasia-based researchers, to help the ISEH build and nurture a truly global community. We all share the same ambition to better understand how the blood system functions, and how this knowledge can be exploited to improve the lives of patients. Parochialism and a desire to impede international exchange by some people outside of our community should not deter us in working together to achieve these aims. On that note, I look forward to meeting in person as many of you as possible in August, in sunny Brisbane.