



SAPA-GP Conference Series 2009-2010

Drug Development in Biologics

With the economy situation still struggling and big pharmaceuticals companies reshaping their strategies, SAPA-GP organized on March 6, 2010, a day-long conference of Drug Development in Biologics in Fort Washington, a suburban town outside Philadelphia. Over 200 people attended this timely conference.



Keynote speaker Dr. Herren Wu

“Only 100 people registered on-line a week before the conference.” said Guosheng Wu, Ph.D., one of the conference organizers. Nobody, however, could expect that so many people showed up at last minutes and a great number of them were medicinal chemists. For them, biologics might be a new thing. The greater Philadelphia areas are a place for many major pharmaceuticals

companies, including Merck, GSK, AstraZeneca, and J&J and its subsidiaries. It has been noted that many companies have recently reorganized their workforce, but their biologics divisions remain intact, if not expanded. Apparently, SAPA-GP selected the right theme for its members.



Speaker Dr. Russell Weiner and Co-Chair Dr. Laura Hong

This conference was organized by three co-chairs: Peter Luo, Ph.D (Merck/Abmaxis), Laura Hong, Ph.D. (Merck) and Zhibiao Fu, Ph.D. (GSK). The keynote speech in the morning was presented by Dr. Herren Wu, Vice President of MedImmune, a

The current SAPA-GP president Tsang-Bin Tzeng, Ph.D., gave a brief opening remark at 9 AM. He offered warm welcome for all the people and acknowledged volunteers who made the

biotech company headquartered in Gaithersburg, MD. Dr. Wu described challenges and opportunities in biologics drug discovery and development. Other topics in the morning included pre-clinical safety assessment (Dr. Danuta Herzyk, Merck), PK/PD studies using therapeutic proteins (Dr. Honghui Zhou, J&J Centocor) and guidelines for the validation of immunoassays Assays (Dr. Russell Weiner, BMS).

Peter Luo, Ph.D., an expert in protein folding, engineering and the antibody phage library technology, summarized current trends in biologics development, especially in antibody generation and engineering, from historical points of view. He also described several influential publications in the fields.



The afternoon session was focused on bioprocess development, manufacturing, formulation [Co-Chair and speaker, Dr. Peter Luo](#) and regulatory. The speeches and presentations were useful and educational, as most of people in the audience were bench scientists in a research environment. Dave Jen, Ph.D., of Alexion Pharmaceuticals, described downstream process development for the large-scale production of antibodies. The size of purification columns and the cost of resins were critical factors for anyone who wants to enter the field. Other speakers in the afternoon included Bruce Vickroy, Ph.D. (GSK), Zhong Liu, Ph.D. (Schering-Plough/Merck), Sandro Nalli, Ph.D. (GSK), Mingfang Hong, Ph.D. (J&J Centocor), Henryk March, Ph.D. (Merck), Melissa Tice, Ph.D. (Merck), Uma Prabhakar, Ph.D.(Frontage) and Larry Wang, Ph.D. (GenScript).



[Speaker Dr. Bruce Vickroy and Co-chair Dr. Zhibiao Fu](#)

One conference participant from Merck commented that the conference was very informative and educational, covering almost every aspect of the research and development in biologics industries. Amela Radoncic, Regional Account Manager of SDIX, said she was very impressed with this

SAPA-GP event, especially when she saw that hundreds of professionals gathered here for a whole day Saturday, and most people were so energetic and listened with full attention to every minute of talks throughout the conference.

Like many other events that SAPA-GP organized, so many SAPA-GP volunteers worked behind the scene and ironed out details, such as picking a conference site, contacting speakers, and writing up an agenda. Zhongda Zhang, Ph.D. an ex-SAPA-GP president but still actively being involved, came to the conference site with many other volunteers an hour before the meeting started, setting up road signs, getting drinks and snacks to the site. They also move more chairs to the meeting room for later comers.

The conference attracted many corporate sponsors including GenScript, GeneWiz, Frontage, ANP-Tech, Eckert Seamanns, ITL, SDIX and Sino-Biologicals. SAPA-GP acknowledged their financial supports, as the rents and foods are getting more and more expensive nowadays. The registration fee for the conference was far from enough. The corporate sponsors also came as ambassadors to showcase their products and services to this highly specialized group of audience.

Established in 1993 in New Jersey, SAPA stands for Sino-American Pharmaceutical Professionals. Over years, it has gained popularity among Chinese American professionals, especially in pharmaceutical sectors. In addition to SAPA-Headquarter, currently there are three regional chapters: SAPA-Greater Philadelphia, SAPA-Northeast (Boston regions) and SAPA-West (California regions). SAPA-GP, however, is the most active.



Speaker Dr. David Jen

Some SAPA leaders and members have started their careers in China, according to the organizers. “It is like a community affair every time when we have a conference or meeting. They come back like old friends.”

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Photos by Zhongren Wu)

