

Summary of the 14th International Conference on Prenatal Diagnosis and Therapy
Vancouver, Canada June 1-4, 2008

Over 500 people attended the conference, which was a record for the International Society for Prenatal Diagnosis (ISPD). From the post-conference evaluations we know that the audience was quite diverse, consisting of maternal-fetal medicine specialists (21%), genetic counselors (28%), clinical laboratory specialists (14%), clinical geneticists (13%), nurses (5%), clinical researchers (6%), and basic researchers (5%). The conference was very well received, as documented by the fact that all of the sessions had median evaluation scores of over 4 (on a scale of 5, with 5 being the best). The abstracts were printed in a special issue of Prenatal Diagnosis (May 2008; 28:S1-76) and the best manuscripts will be published in the December 2008 issue of Prenatal Diagnosis. To date, over 27 manuscripts have been received and are undergoing peer review at the journal. In addition, Professors Bianchi, Hall, and Ferguson-Smith made a 50 minute podcast summary of the highlights of the meeting that will be freely accessible from the journal and society website homepages.

The meeting had 9 plenary sessions (Overview, Fetal Anomalies, Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD), Placental Function and Growth, Multiple Gestation and Fetal therapy, Molecular Cytogenetics, Teratology, Legal and Ethical Issues, Screening for Aneuploidy, Prenatal Screening and Diagnosis for Single Gene Disorders, and Fetal Cells, mRNA and DNA in the Maternal Circulation). Within each plenary session there were invited speakers and 3-4 oral talks selected from the abstracts. In addition there were two posters sessions. Lastly, there were 4 debates that discussed current controversies in prenatal diagnosis. The debates were a new feature of this conference. They were exceptionally well-attended (even late in the day) and they got rave reviews.

Rare diseases were extensively discussed in the session on prenatal screening and diagnosis for single gene disorders, in which spinal muscular atrophy, Fragile X, Ashkenazi Jewish diseases, X-linked ichthyosis, and Noonan syndrome were featured. In the opening session novel stem cell treatment performed for osteogenesis imperfecta in Sweden was discussed. In addition, in the PGD session, PGD for a number of rare monogenic disorders was discussed. Rare conditions such as OEIS sequence and retinoblastoma were featured in the fetal imaging session.

The post-conference evaluations are being used to plan for the next meeting, which will be in late spring, 2010. In the meantime, a number of special interest groups with the common theme of "International Networking" that were formed during the meeting will continue research and education in a number of different areas.