

Global Virus Network Inspires New Collaborations to Combat Viral Threats During Meeting of Top Medical Researchers

Dr. Ab Osterhaus Presented with The GVN Robert C. Gallo Award for Scientific Excellence and Leadership

Baltimore, MD, November 17, 2016: The Global Virus Network (GVN), a coalition of the world's leading medical virology research centers working together to prevent illness and death from viral disease, held its 8th meeting in Sapporo, Japan late last month in partnership with the Japanese Society of Virology, the National Institute of Infectious Diseases (NIID) in Tokyo, Japan and the Research Center for Zoonosis Control (CZC) at Hokkaido University in Sapporo, Japan. At a time when new pandemics caused by viruses such as Zika and virulent reemerging threats such as Ebola are on the rise, top international researchers shared compelling data to inspire new collaborations and address public health crises. Viruses dominating discussions also included, among others, human papilloma virus (HPV), influenza, Lassa virus, dengue virus, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis viruses, chikungunya virus, and human T cell leukemia virus (HTLV).

"This year's program included some of the most interesting and robust research data that I have seen since GVN's inception," said Robert Gallo, MD, Co-Founder and Scientific Director of the GVN and Director of the Institute of Human Virology at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, a GVN Center of Excellence, in Baltimore, Maryland, USA. "I was equally impressed with the enthusiasm and creative ideas put forth by our members that will strengthen GVN's reach both scientifically and regionally. Their commitment to advancing GVN's mission is inspiring." He continued, "Further, I want to extend my gratitude to our GVN colleagues Hideki Hasegawa, MD, PhD, Director of the Department of Pathology of Japan's National Institute of Infectious Diseases and Hirofumi Sawa, MD, PhD, Deputy Director and Professor of Molecular Pathobiology at the Research Center for Zoonosis Control (CZC) at Hokkaido University for their gracious hospitality and for co-hosting a profoundly productive meeting."

"We were pleased that the Japanese Society of Virology partnered with the GVN to host this year's meeting in Sapporo," said Drs. Hasegawa and Sawa. "We heard from many Japanese researchers who benefited from the exposure to GVN's elite virus researchers, and we hope that those contacts facilitated through this meeting are utilized as Japanese virologists advance their own laboratory research."

During the meeting, the GVN presented Ab Osterhaus, DVM, PhD, Director of the [University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover](#) in Hannover, Germany, a GVN Center of Excellence, with The GVN Robert C. Gallo Award for Scientific Excellence and Leadership for his pioneering contributions in influenza and coronavirus research as well as his contributions to advancing the GVN mission.

"Dr. Osterhaus is most deserving of this honor with his decades long career including, among many other important contributions, discovering more than 50 new viruses in humans and

animals and helping the World Health Organization to effectively combat outbreaks including SARS and pandemic influenza,” said William Hall, MD, PhD, Co-founder of the GVN and Professor of Microbiology at the University College Dublin, a GVN Center of Excellence in Dublin, Ireland. “Dr. Osterhaus has also been a leader in the GVN by actively participating in our international meetings and short course programs, and providing ongoing scientific analyses and updates on viral threats.”

Dr. Gallo continued, “I respect Dr. Osterhaus for his important basic science contributions in medical virology and his ability to translate those contributions into broad public health initiatives. He is a true leader and the GVN values both his intellect and his friendship.” In addition to honoring Dr. Osterhaus, GVN Centers of Excellence reviewed strategies propelling the GVN forward, including engaging new scientific communities, the launch of a new GVN Task Force, and the exchange of ideas on training programs that address new and existing viral threats.

“Since many GVN Centers of Excellence are working with animal pathogens, I believe the GVN will benefit from increased partnerships with veterinary research institutes working on epizootic animal diseases,” said Joaquim Segalés, DVM, PhD, Director of the Centre de Recerca en Sanitat Animal (CReSA-IRTA) located at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) in Barcelona, Spain. “I will help lead the GVN in cultivating these important collaborations with organizations that can provide a number of new possibilities in better preventing future animal to man outbreaks.”

The GVN Zika Task Force Chair Scott Weaver, MS, PhD, who is also Director of the University of Texas Medical Branch’s Institute for Human Infections and Immunity and Scientific Director of the Galveston National Laboratory, a GVN Center of Excellence in Galveston, Texas, USA, introduced GVN members to the Task Force’s latest Zika serum bank initiative. The Task Force, comprising 28 top Zika experts from around the world, serves as a catalyst for driving communication and information flow between fellow GVN colleagues researching and responding to the Zika epidemic gripping the world.

“As many of you know, a major obstacle to understanding and controlling the Zika epidemic is affordable, accurate diagnostics,” said Dr. Weaver. “The Zika serum bank will help alleviate this obstacle. We hope to assemble a collection of at least 25 sera, each in quantities to supply 25 or more investigators, and we will ensure that these precious samples are made available to the worthiest requestors worldwide,” said Dr. Weaver.

Peter Palese, PhD, Chair of the Department of Microbiology at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, a GVN Center of Excellence in New York, New York, USA, facilitated discussions on fostering international partnerships among GVN members to address the worldwide problem of influenza. “My colleagues and I are working to design the next-generation of flu vaccines that provoke a more robust and durable immune response to a wide variety of influenza viruses,” said Dr. Palese. “I believe we can achieve this feat. A broadly protective universal vaccine will

not only save lives, but it will eliminate the need for annual revaccination while saving enormous amounts of money in associated costs.”

Sharon Lewin, FRACP, PhD, Director of the GVN Center of Excellence, The Peter Doherty Institute for Infection & Immunity at The University of Melbourne & Royal Melbourne Hospital, announced that GVN’s 9th international meeting will be held next year in Melbourne, Australia. “Australia is looking forward to welcoming GVN members to Australia in the Fall of 2017,” said Dr. Lewin. “We will boost GVN’s annual meeting program and design next year’s agenda to include a day dedicated to the next generation of medical virologists. It is incumbent upon us, the members of the GVN, to look for new ways to mentor rising medical virologists so that the world is better prepared against viral threats in the years to come.”