

Proceeding of the XVIII Congress of the Italian Society of Pure and Applied Biophysics (SIBPA), Palermo, Sicily, September 2006

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The contributions collected in this special issue of *the European Biophysics Journal* have been presented at the XVIII congress of the Italian Society of Pure and Applied Biophysics (SIBPA).

The Society, founded in 1973 with the aim of bringing together all the Italian researchers working in the Biophysics field, is involved in many activities such as Schools for young scientists, meetings, etc. The society congress is organized every 2 years and it represents a very useful occasion for sharing knowledge and experiences. In September 2006, it took place in Terrasini (Palermo, Italy) within the beautiful frame of the Sicilian Fall.

The 5-day scientific program, consisting of 19 plenary lectures, 56 short contributions and 100 posters, was structured in seven different sections concerning molecular and nanoscale biophysics, biomolecular aggregation, biomaterials and drug delivery, proteomic and system biology, photobiophysics, membrane processes, biophysical methods and instrumentation.

Within this program, we were debating the discovery of many pathological states referable to protein non-native folding; the importance of a smart drug delivery to increase its effectiveness and patient's compliance; the development of computational and system biology to understand biologi-

cal processes through mathematical analysis and comparison with experimental data; the importance of elucidating the mechanism of the biological systems and, to the purpose, implementing new instrumentation. Many of these arguments are main topics of the papers here presented.

Finally, we would like to thank all the invited speakers for their very interesting presentations and the oral contributors, in most cases young researchers, for presenting their Ph.D. work. The deep feeling of the sponsors, either business companies or public agencies, has allowed the participation of a large amount of young scientists having the opportunity of presenting their own work, mainly for the first time. A special thanks goes to the technical and administrative staff of CNR, IBF (Palermo Unit) that, with their work, contributed to the success of the meeting.

Members of the local organizing committee

Pier Luigi San Biagio (CNR, Institute of Biophysics, Palermo Unit, President of the Society)

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While writing this brief Preface, we learned that Professor Reinhart Heinrich (Humboldt University, Department of Theoretical Biophysics, Berlin), invited speaker of the Congress, has passed away unexpectedly on 23 October. I wish to remember Professor Heinrich for his pioneering fundamental contribution in Theoretical Biophysics and System Biology.

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