

Editorial

Foreword for SEANAC inaugural conference

The inaugural conference for the Southern and Eastern Africa Network of Analytical Chemists (SEANAC) was held at the Gaborone Sun Hotel, in Gaborone, Botswana, from 7–10th July 2004. The theme of SEANAC's inaugural conference was 'Networking for regional prosperity', and for that at least 20 different countries from within Africa were represented as well as north America, Europe and the Middle East. This conference followed pre-conference workshops that were held at the University of Botswana. Dr. Ron Majors of Agilent Technologies, USA gave a workshop on Solid Phase Extraction Sample Preparation, Dr. Gaspar Mhinzi of the University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, gave a workshop on Chemometrics, Prof. James Holcombe of the University of Texas at Houston, USA, gave a workshop on Presenting and Publishing Scientific Data and Prof. Omowunmi Sadik of the University of New York at Binghamton gave a workshop about Mentorship.

The plenary lectures on the first day were given by Prof. Sadik (USA), Prof. Lo Gorton (Sweden), Prof. Damia Barcelo (Spain), and Dr. Roland Schnurpfeil (Germany). Prof. Sadik gave an excellent talk on trends and challenges in biochemical sensors for chemical and environmental monitoring. Of relevance to Africa was the highlighted promise shown by biosensors for rapid diagnosis of HIV as an alternative to ELISA. Prof. Damia Barcelo discussed the integration of chemical analysis and the effects of studies of carps and yeast on endocrine disruptors in sewage treatment plants receiving waters and sediments. In his plenary lecture Prof. Gorton outlined the fundamental and applied aspects of enzyme based amperometric biosensors and Dr. Roland Schnurpfeil gave an interesting account of the Proteome: the integrated mass spectrometry based proteomic suite that facilitates the acquisition of information from various samples.

The first plenary lecture on the second day was by Prof. Gyorgy Marko-Varga (Sweden). From his talk, *Proteomics in disease; role for analytical chemists*, Prof. Marko-Varga clearly showed the gathering of analytical chemists that there are opportunities in biology where analytical chemistry can help answer some vital questions. Prof. Roger Smith (UK) and Prof. Douglas Rawlings (South Africa) gave the other two plenary lectures. Roger Smith spoke about The EU CRM column and interlaboratory studies and problems of accurate method transferability in HPLC. Prof.

Douglas Rawlings's plenary lecture was on 'The mobility assisted dissolution of minerals and its use in the mining industry'. This lecture was very informative and also gave a different perspective to the analytical chemists as it showed the chemistry of micro-organisms that have varying degrees of selectivity for different metals ions. The last two plenary lectures were by Prof. S. B. Jonnalagadda (South Africa) who spoke about the 'Scope and potential of seawater in treatment of sewage waters' and representatives of IOCD, Dr. Walter Benson (USA) and Dr. Albert Poland (USA) who talked about African analytical chemistry trainers.

The plenary lectures given on the third day were by Prof. Jorge Gardea-Torresdey (USA), Prof. Luc Nagels (Belgium), Prof. Robert McCrindle (South Africa) and Prof. Geoffrey Kamau (Kenya). Prof. Gardea-Torresdey gave a very interesting lecture on phytoremediation technologies for the removal of toxic heavy metal ions from contaminated waters and soil. Prof. Nagels posed several questions in his address 'Potentiometric detection for HPLC is a reality—which classes of ionic organic substances are the targets?' Prof. McCrindle discussed the speciation of Cr(III) and Cr(VI) in cement by AAS. Prof. Geoffrey Kamau gave a lecture entitled 'Myoglobin as a potential catalyst for the decomposition of persistent organohalide pollutants: selective control and rate enhancement'. Dr Ron Majors (USA) concluded the plenary session by his lecture entitled 'New directions in HPLC column technology for rapid, efficient and selective separations'.

On the last day of the conference plenary lectures were given by Prof. Erno Lindner (USA), Prof. James A Holcombe (USA), Dr. Ghirma Moges (Netherlands), and Prof. Malin Akerblom (Sweden) and Prof. Henrik Kylin (Sweden). Prof. Lindner focussed on the small devices that deliver for analytical chemistry in his talk about 'Microfabricated electrochemical sensors and their application in bedside analysis and home care diagnostics'. James Holcombe's lecture addressed the area of trace metal analysis and metal analysis and development of a novel means of metals remediation in the environment using immobilized biopolymers. Ghirma Moges addressed a very hot issue in health that has been the focus of 10 years of research in Universities spanning Africa and Europe. His talk was appropriately entitled 'Glutamate oxi-

dase advances; the selective bioanalytical detection of the neurotoxic amino acid b-ODAP in grass pea—a decade of progress'. Prof. Malin Akerblom and Prof. Henrik Kylin provided a platform for some debate with their presentation, low-technology methods for pesticide residue analysis. Dr. John Makhubalo from OPCW (The Netherlands) concluded the plenary session by giving the conference delegates an overview of the activities and opportunities within OPCW.

Despite the fact that the conference venue had to be changed 2 weeks before the conference due to US President Bush's visit to Botswana, the proceedings were without any problems. The 150 Conference delegates had the opportunity to listen to 115 lectures that included 18 keynote lectures as well as 50 poster presentations. Indeed the inaugural conference succeeded in meeting its objectives. This should be attributed to the hardwork by Drs. J.C. Ngila, M.M. Nindi,

V.C. Obuserg and G. Sawula, who were members of the organising committee.

The next SEANAC conference will be held in July 2006 in Gaborone, Botswana. Further information about the conference as well as the SEANAC activities are available at <http://www.seanac.org>, which is the gateway to analytical chemistry in Africa.

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