



Congratulations / Félicitations

***Dr. Michael Ratcliffe, University of Toronto
The John D Reynolds Award Recipient***

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My first exposure to Immunology was the structure of the antibody molecule that was part of my Biochemistry degree that I took at the University of Glasgow. Despite this rather minimal exposure to the workings of the immune system, I did my Ph.D. in Immunology, based at the Wellcome Research Laboratories, an early exposure to the pharmaceutical industry, and University College London. It was at that time that I joined the British Society for Immunology, which in those days was already a well established society that typically ran two meetings a year in London and a summer meeting in different parts of the UK. Going to those BSI meetings brought home the importance of this type of national meeting, especially for young investigators and students. Importantly it was a great way of getting to know what was going on; not just in the science of Immunology but in terms of the personalities and organization of immunology throughout the country.... and of course these meetings were also a great opportunity for students to meet and interact with faculty.

Following my graduate work in London, I moved to the Basel Institute for Immunology and was there at the same time as a number of immunologists that have since moved to Canada, including Michael Julius, Chris Paige, Norman Iscove, Gordon Keller as well as John Reynolds, who this award is named after. In fact John and I left the Institute at the same time and shared a farewell party, which gave us a productive way of finishing up all the bottles of duty free we had accumulated!

After leaving the Basel Institute and spending several years at University College London, back in the UK, I was recruited to McGill University in 1986. Certainly one of the major influences guiding the decision to move to McGill was the sense that Canada was developing a strong base in Immunology and that there was a real sense of growth in the Canadian Immunology community. The International Immunology Congress in Toronto that year also raised the profile of Immunology in Canada and gave me the opportunity to meet many of those who would become colleagues across the country.

My first interaction with the CSI was being recruited by Wayne Lapp to the organizing committee for the 2nd CSI meeting in 1988. This was the first “eastern” meeting, following on from the very successful inaugural meeting in Lake Louise the previous year. The 2nd CSI meeting was held at Mont Gabriel, north of Montreal and was a great success, combining great science with the opportunity for students and faculty to interact. Two years later, Wayne Lapp was by then President of CSI and asked me to chair the organizing committee for the 4th CSI meeting, which was also to be held in Mont Gabriel. Based on the success of the 2nd meeting, we booked the entire Mont Gabriel facility as well as a second hotel down the road for spill-over accommodation. As the meeting date got closer, the second hotel filled up, and the third and we were well into our fourth hotel by the time the meeting started. When I was asked by a couple of people at the meeting why they had been booked into rooms that had heart shaped beds and mirrors on the ceiling we decided that a change of venue to larger facilities for the next eastern meeting might be needed! I then organized the next three eastern meetings at Le Chantecler, again in the Laurentians, north of Montreal before gratefully handing over to the Sherbrooke group to organize the next one. During this time, many of the early CSI meetings were organised by John Reynolds in the west and me in the east and it was always a delight to work with John in the transfer of information from one meeting to the next... especially in the pre-email era (yes there was such a time!).

Since those days I have been delighted to continue to be involved in CSI, serving on CSI Council and following John Reynolds as CSI President. I currently represent the CSI on the International Union of Immunology Societies Council and look forward to many more years of being part of the Canadian Society for Immunology and the Canadian Immunology community.