

The 17th International ISFH Congress

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The 17th International Congress of the International Society of Forensic Haemogenetics (ISFH) was held in Oslo, Norway, from September 2-6, 1997. Approximately 350 participants from 26 countries gathered for this pleasant mix of philosophy, practical applications and camaraderie. Almost forty oral presentations and 170 poster presentations took place over the four days of the meeting.

Following the opening of the meeting by our gracious Norwegian hosts, the presentations began with a historical perspective of genetic identification methods. Prof. Dr. Bernd Brinkmann described the use of genetic methods from Landsteiner's ABO groups to current short tandem repeat (STR) methods. Sir Alec Jeffreys reviewed the isolation and characterization of minisatellites and then described recent studies showing that these repeat arrays are directional in nature, with clusters of variability. Dr. Svante Pääbo described the use of detection of aspartic acid racemization to determine suitability of amplifying and sequencing very old samples. This, along with the use of new sequencing methods, allowed analysis of ancestral sequences, providing evidence that modern humans replaced Neanderthals, rather than interbreeding with them.

The status of national database programs in Europe and North America was presented by Dr. Peter Gill (United Kingdom), Dr. Bruce Budowle (United States) and Dr. Chantal Fregeau (Canada). All of these efforts are proceeding quickly and are based on fluorescent detection of multiplex STR systems. Several investigators also described collaborative studies on the identification of Y chromosome STR markers and their use in mixed sample and population analyses.

While evaluation and applications of STR systems dominated the oral and especially the poster presentations, analyses of mitochondrial DNA and multivariant repeat (MVR) systems were also significantly represented. In addition, new technologies for separation and detection of DNA were discussed. These included miniaturized capillary electrophoresis (Dr. George Sensabaugh) and Surface Enhanced Resonance Raman Scattering (Dr. Nigel Watson).

The 18th International ISFH Congress will be held in San Francisco, California, in 1999.

Upcoming Meetings

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF FORENSIC SCIENCES

February 9-14, 1998
 San Francisco, California

SOUTHWESTERN ASSOCIATION OF FORENSIC SCIENTISTS

April 20-23, 1998
 South Padre Island, Texas
 Contact: Joe Marchan
 (956) 682 5556

NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF FORENSIC SCIENTISTS

May 4-8, 1998
 Portland, Oregon
 Contact: Deborah Newville
 (503) 229 5017

SOUTHWESTERN WORKING GROUP ON DNA ANALYSIS METHODS (SWGDM)

June 2-3, 1998
 Austin, Texas
 Contact: John Krebsbach
 (505) 768 2576

NINTH INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON HUMAN IDENTIFICATION

October 7-10, 1998
 Orlando, Florida
 Contact: Vicki Schmitz
 (608) 277 2639