

Preface

Special issue: The 9th European symposium on calcium-binding proteins in normal and transformed cells

The 9th European Symposium on Calcium-Binding Proteins in Normal and Transformed Cells was held outside the beautiful old city of Strasbourg, France, at the campus of the Ecole Supérieure de Biotechnologie in Illkirch from 19 to 22 July 2006. More than 170 participants from different European countries and around the globe attended the conference. The meeting was divided into six sessions of lectures, including oral poster presentations and two poster sessions with close to 100 posters. The symposium was opened with a plenary lecture by Sir Michael Berridge (Cambridge, UK), who gave a splendid in-depth view on calcium signaling in health and disease.

The meeting spanned a wide range of calcium-signaling processes starting from the evolution of calcium functions and calcium-binding proteins and included structural aspects of calcium-binding proteins, the influence of calcium signaling on gene expression and cellular trafficking, pathophysiological aspects and a session on systems biology. One highlight of the meeting was the session devoted to calcium channels because of the exciting new findings of how the depletion of intracellular calcium stores is sensed by the newly discovered protein STIM and mediated to the store-operated influx calcium channels such as ORAI, a long sought member of the I_{CRAC} or store-operated (SOC) Ca^{2+} channels. A number of lecturers presented structural aspects of Ca^{2+} -binding proteins, as well as their interactions with targets, and emphasized how malfunction of calcium regulation could result in various diseases. Some lectures paved the way for proteins involved in calcium signaling to be new and interesting therapeutic targets. The large number of young researchers attending the meeting not only underlined the attraction of studying various aspects of calcium biology but also contributed to lively discussions throughout the meeting. The high quality of the many posters

presented at the meeting is documented by the two poster prizes recommended by two committees that had the difficult task of selecting one poster from each of the two sessions. The poster prize winners were invited to submit a summary of their research to this special issue published within the section of Molecular Cell Research of *Biochimica et Biophysica Acta*.

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