

## REVIEW OF THE 11<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL MYCOLOGICAL CONGRESS (IMC11), 2018

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The 11<sup>th</sup> International Mycological Congress (IMC11) was held at the Puerto Rico Convention Center, San Juan, Puerto Rico from July 15<sup>th</sup> to July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018. This conference is regularly conducted after every four years. The sponsors of this congress were The Mycological Society of America (MSA), the International Mycological Association, the Latin American Mycological Association (ALM), the Puerto Rican Mycological Society (SPM), Universidad del Turabo and Meet Puerto Rico. It is important to note that this was the first time IMC is celebrated in Latin America and the Caribbean region, one of the circa 30 biodiversity hotspots of the world.

The congress theme was “Mycological discoveries for a better world”. This dynamic congress featured world-class keynote and plenary speakers, progressive symposia, poster sessions packed with new data and abundant opportunities for interaction among researchers, students and amateurs. The conference program was divided into eight thematic themes: Applications,

Development, Ecology, Education, Environment, Evolution, Genomics and Pathology; comprised of almost 45 symposia with 261 oral presentations and 7 plenary lectures that were conducted in the largest venue of the convention centre without any conflict and overlapping. The invited speakers of this conference were eminent in their respective fields. The participants discussed how fungi in all their expression contribute to the health of the society and ecosystems. The congress explored from the diversity, ecology and conservation of fungi to their biotechnology, evolution, genetics and medical importance. This meeting was basically intended to bring together key workers from the academic and applied sectors to share knowledge, review progress and set priorities for further studies with particular emphasis on mycology.

There were nearly 580 posters on display distributed in 3 poster sessions, including 2 periods each. All the posters were very informative, intellectually stimulating and equipped with recent knowledge of fungal sciences.

The convention center was adorned in the congress colors, posters, video screens and fungal pictures. There were several art exhibits on fungal themes and local heritage of Puerto Rico, the “Island of Enchantment”. Several stalls of different societies and organizations were also presented adjacent to the poster display area. Further, donations were also collected by Mycological Society of America Students section for ongoing hurricane relief efforts in Puerto Rico.

There were field trips for separate destinations i.e. El Yunque National Forest, Río Abajo State Forest, Carite State Forest and Las Cabezas de San Juan on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. In addition, several workshops were conducted simultaneously for participants during conference days. “Ascomycetes workshop” was convened by Andrew Miller, Huzefa Raja, Teresa Iturriaga and Martina Reblova in University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras Campus, Río Piedras, PR; while “Bacterial-fungal Interactions workshop” was conducted by Gregory Bonito and Jessie Uehling in Convention Centre, PR. Greg Mueller and Giuliana Furci conducted workshop on “Assessing the global conservation status of fungi”, while “Coordinated fungal development and secondary metabolism workshop” was convened by Gerhard Braus in Convention Centre, PR. Forest pathology tree crop workshop by Meike Piepenbring, Melissa Mardones, D. Jean Lodge and Martha Giraldo at University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras Campus, Río Piedras, PR was really interesting and a source of information for fungal pathology students. “Beyond the lab bench: How to engage in effective online science communication” workshop by Christopher Smyth and “Publishing Workshop (sponsor by Taylor and Francis)” were attended by many participants.

Council Meetings of International Mycological Association and Mycological Society of America were also apprehended on second day of conference. Fungal Nomenclature Session of

International Mycological Congress was held on July 19<sup>th</sup> to discuss the proposal “to allow use of DNA sequences as types”.

There were also few meetings of “Special Interest Groups” that were basically intended to bring together key workers from the academic and applied sectors to share knowledge, review progress and set priorities for further studies on different topics of common interest, including:

- ICTF DNA taxonomy debate session
- Anaerobic Fungi: Genomics and Biotechnological Potential
- *Colletotrichum*
- Systematics of Leotiomycetes
- Golden Mycological Triangle – Ascomycota
- International subcommission on *Colletotrichum* taxonomy
- *Flammulina*
- Golden mycological triangle – discovery of novel bioactive secondary metabolites
- Phylachorales: Systematics and advances

MSA Presidential Address on “Empowering new investigators by allowing grad students to choose their own research projects”, by Thomas J. Volk, President of Mycological Society of America, was delivered on Thursday, July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018, followed by MSA Awards and Banquet.

An interesting and valuable part of this congress was named as “Oral History for Mycology” in which interviews of eminent mycologists i.e. Lynne Boddy, David Hawksworth and John Taylor were conducted. These interviews were inspirational for young mycologists aspiring to research in this field. For young scientists, it was a source of guidance and introduced new vistas for them.

The magnitude of this Congress was awesome, not only in the number of attendees, presentations, posters and sheer size of the venue, but on the amount of new information to assimilate, as well as the efforts put forth by the International Mycological Association, Mycological Society of America and, of course, the local organizers to ensure a successful meeting. For me, it was a life-changing and mycology-affirming experience to participate in International Mycological Congress. It was a fantastic meeting filled with informative keynote addresses, incredible symposia, intriguing

poster presentations, interesting field trips, and inspiring social events. With its common roots in field biology and laboratory science, this mycology conference provided a unique opportunity for interaction and exchange between scientists with diverse technical backgrounds and from different cultures. The mycologists of the world gathered there and shared the latest, cutting-edge research on all aspects of fungal biology. The next congress is going to be held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in 2022; so there is a lot to do and discover mycology. Hope to see you there.