

Report by the Commission „Virology“ of the SSM

The 5th Swiss Virology Meeting was held on September 9.-10. 2014 in Thun in a similar format as the previous meetings organized in association with the section Virology of the Swiss Society for Microbiology (SSM). Traditionally, the meeting started with an invited lecture of a Swiss virologist who did his career abroad. This year the lecture was given by Prof. Michael Linden from the Kings College in London on new developments on viruses as agents of gene therapy. The main program consisted of principal sessions consisting of plenary lectures given by established researchers in Switzerland combined with short talks selected from the abstracts presented by PhD students and young postdoctoral fellows. This combination allowed a good overview about the forefront of virology research in Switzerland encouraging at the same time young researchers to step out and present their work to a greater audience. Another major element of our meeting was the poster session with over 50 posters, most of them of very high quality. The venue, accommodation, and meals were provided at the Hotel Freienhof with additional rooms made available in two additional hotels in a few minutes walking distance from the meeting. For postdocs and Ph.D students, rooms for individual and shared accommodation were made available to encourage the participation of a maximum of young participants. The Swiss Virology Meeting has been attended by over 100 participants, including a large number of young scientists, in particular PhD students and young postdocs. The meeting took place in an informal and collegial atmosphere, encouraging people to interact with colleagues and to establish collaborations. The range of talks gave an excellent overview of virology research that has an impressive breadth and quality in our country. As the meetings before, this fifth national gathering contributed to the coherence of the Swiss virology research community and promoted the integration of young researchers that just entered the field. The meeting also allowed young principal investigators to present themselves and their upcoming research programs to the Swiss virology community.

In addition, the SSM supported the Mte Verita Conference on ‘Early Events in Virus Infections’, held in Ascona, Switzerland, August 25 to 28, 2014, convened by Ari Helenius and Urs Greber.

Overall, the Swiss Virology community provided a vital image with many interactions including student workshops organized by the CUSO and others. The future task will be to keep this spirit alive and to explore further avenues of interaction. The launch of the new SSM web site will be an excellent opportunity to provide a comprehensive overview on current activities within the Section of Virology of the SSM.

Finally, I want to express my deep and cordial thanks to Monika Engels who has guided the Section of Virology through the past years with great success and who is always a valuable source of information and experience.

Volker Thiel, Bern, March 2015