

II Latin American Symposium on Human Identification

June 9–12, 1999

*Ouro Minas Palace Hotel,
Belo Horizonte, Brazil*



Over 150 scientists and public officials attended the II Latin American Symposium on Human Identification in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. This conference included experts on DNA typing from ten different countries representing a cross-section of Latin America and Spain. The conference brought together leaders and technicians in the field of DNA typing from the entire region for a series of talks on key subjects of interest to this community and provided a forum for discussion of issues relevant to their work. The conference was sponsored by Biobrás Diagnosticos of Brazil, Hitachi Software Engineering Company, Ltd., USA, and Promega Corporation as part of an effort by these companies to support education and training for scientists and public officials in the Latin American region.

GITAD MEETING

One of the high points of the conference occurred before the symposium began. Representatives from forensic laboratories from Spain and eight Latin American countries met for the first official meeting of GITAD (Grupo Iberoamericana de Trabajo en Análisis de DNA). GITAD had met previously during the Ninth International Symposium on Human Identification in Orlando, Florida, with 11 countries represented. GITAD was formed to coordinate the efforts of the entire Latin American, Spanish and Portuguese DNA typing communities, to facilitate communication and sharing of technical knowledge and experiences, and to help improve the quality assurance and quality control programs of the member countries. During the meeting in Brazil, the group made several major decisions. They recommended that six STR loci, CSF1PO, TPOX, TH01, D7S820, D13S317 and D16S539, be included in the initial set of loci used for all STR analysis throughout the region. These loci were selected for their proven power of discrimination among the populations of this region and their performance both in silver and fluorescent systems. Additional loci will be added in the future based on similar criteria of selection. A second major decision of the GITAD was the election of Dr. Jose Lorente of the University of Granada, Spain, as first president of the group, and Dr. Hugo Jorquera of the Ministerio de Justicia, Chile, as vice-president. In the future, this meeting will be seen as a milestone in the development of the field of DNA typing in Latin America.

SYMPOSIUM

Two-thirds of the featured guests and speakers were from Latin American countries, making this a truly regional conference. The talks covered a wide range of subjects including forensic and paternity applications, population database development, technical advances in reagents and instruments, and quality assurance and quality control issues. Dr. Juan Yunis, Servicios Medicos Yunis Turbay, National University of Colombia, opened the conference with a presentation on DNA typing as a tool in the identification of missing persons and crime investigations in Colombia. During the conference, Dr. Elizeu Carvalho, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), Brazil, Dr. Rodrigo Moura Neto, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), Brazil, Dr. Cecelia Crouse, Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, West Palm Beach, FL, USA, Todd Bille, Indiana State Police, Indianapolis, IN, USA, and Dr. Jose Lorente, University of Granada, Spain, presented information on forensic issues in their respective countries. Hugo Jorquera of Servicio Médico Legal, Chile, presented a summary of the GITAD meeting held on June 8. Dr. Martin Tracey of the Florida International University, Miami, FL, USA, presented a short review of the use of statistics in forensics casework to complete the session on the first day of the conference.



Left, speakers from the II Latin American Symposium. Shown (from left to right) are: Eduardo Soares, Biobrás; Luciano Chaves Arantes; Mary Lasecki, Promega Corporation; Juan Yunis, Servicios Medicos Yunis Turbay; Cecelia Crouse, Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, Florida; Todd Bille, Indiana State Police.

Right, meeting participants were able to tour historic Belo Horizonte, Brazil, after the meeting's conclusion. Participants are shown here in front of Saint Francis of Assisi Church in Belo Horizonte.



On the second day, Dr. Sergio Bydlowski of Hemocentro-Saõ Paulo, Brazil, and Dr. Arthur Eisenberg of the University of North Texas, TX, USA, discussed their work in developing population databases of a large number of the ethnic groups of Brazil. Use of DNA typing in paternity testing was the subject of presentations by Dr. Franklin Rumjanek, UFRJ, Brazil, Dr. Arthur Eisenberg and Eduardo Lewis of the DNA 4 Laboratorio de Genetica e Biologia Molecular, Brazil. Dr. Jose Lorente of the University of Granada, Spain, Elizabeth Amiot of Promega Corporation and Bret Light of Hitachi Software Engineering Company, Ltd., USA, presented overviews of the use of silver and fluorescent STR systems and instruments. Finally, Marcia Magalhaes de Almeida Rodrigues of the Laboratorio Hermes Pardini, Brazil, presented a fine overview on the application of ISO 9002 standards to a DNA typing laboratory.

The final day of the conference featured talks on the various aspects of establishing and operating a DNA typing lab. Dr. Cecelia Crouse began the day with a discussion of handling evidence from a crime scene, and Luciano Chaves Arantes of the Policia Civil do Distrito Federal followed with a presentation on how to set up a DNA typing laboratory. Next, Todd Bille discussed the technical issues important in the isolation of DNA from crime scene evidence. Dr. Rita

Weispfenning of Promega Corporation presented a review of the STR systems available for performing DNA typing followed by Bret Light on the use of the FMBIO® II for data analysis. Dr. Arthur Eisenberg closed the conference with a discussion of the United States DNA Advisory Board (of which he is now chairman), and its role in setting standards for forensics testing in that country.

The conference was preceded by a day-long statistics workshop on June 8. This workshop was attended by nearly 80 scientists and featured a half-day explanation of the use of statistics for paternity and forensic casework. The instructors of this workshop, Dr. Arthur Eisenberg and Dr. Martin Tracey, are experts in this field and provided excellent instruction. The strong interest in this subject showed that the attendees recognize the importance of this often misunderstood and misused subject.

Latin America, as a region, is well on its way to laying the groundwork for use of DNA typing as a routine tool for forensics and paternity casework. The energy level of the attendees was very high as discussions continued late into each evening, and even the last session on Saturday was well attended. The technical expertise of the registrants as a whole was very impressive. Silver STR systems are used in all of the countries represented and are becoming widely used in many others as the number of labs perform-

Upcoming Meetings

10TH INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON HUMAN IDENTIFICATION

September 29–October 2, 1999

Lake Buena Vista, Florida

Internet:

www.promega.com/geneticsymp10/

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF CRIMINALISTS

October 12–16, 1999

Ontario, California

Internet:

www.criminalistics.com/CAC/

SOUTHWESTERN ASSOCIATION OF FORENSIC SCIENCES/ MIDWESTERN ASSOCIATION OF FORENSIC SCIENCES

October 10–22, 1999

Cape Girardeau, Missouri

NORTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF FORENSIC SCIENTISTS

October 14–16, 1999

Hyannis, Massachusetts

Internet:

www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/lab/5122/neafs01.htm

52ND ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF FORENSIC SCIENCES

February 21–26, 2000

John Ascuaga's Nugget Hotel and Resort

Reno, Nevada

Internet:

www.aafs.org

ing DNA typing increase rapidly. The cohesiveness of the group and the attendees' willingness to cooperate are strong themes that appeared frequently during the meeting. Latin America is now ready to use DNA typing technology for the benefit of their societies and is moving rapidly forward in this effort.

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