

## Global Day of Immunology 2008

The global Day of Immunology (DoI) has truly become a reality; I am grateful and pleased. The DoI, which first took place on April 29, 2005 in Europe, has established itself as a solid exercise beyond Europe. The 2008 DoI has witnessed major activities in 21 different countries around the world (four outside Europe). We are pleased that many new activities have been added to the list established by the DoI in previous years and, most importantly, that national societies outside of Europe have been rallied to join in. For further details, please have a look at the DoI website ([www.dayofimmunology.org](http://www.dayofimmunology.org)). There you will find short descriptions of the many activities that took place all over the world. Although the DoI is celebrated on April 29 each year, we feel the effects of its realisation throughout the year. After all, the purpose of this endeavour is to raise awareness amongst the public, the press, politicians and decision makers about the critical importance of the immune system in everybody's everyday life. The readers of the *European Journal of Immunology* are active immunologists and hence need not be told about the importance of the immune system; however, I hope that you will have a look at the DoI website and become enthused to organize new activities within your national society, irrespective of your location within the world. You can begin now, since the next DoI 2009 will be the culmination of all activities organised throughout the coming year to raise awareness about the immune system's benefits.

Scrolling through our DoI website, you will see that immunologists in almost every major city across Australia participated in DoI activities, and that the Japanese immunologists have organized activities for public and high school students with a major event taking place near Tokyo under the name

“*Men-eki Fushigi Mirai*” (2008). Our Japanese colleagues have published a book about immunology (Fig. 1), formulated as a result of their outreach activities (see the accompanying article *One small step for immunologists*), and we hope that this will in turn stimulate new ideas globally. Now to Europe where most activities took place; our British and Portuguese colleagues have increased the number of discussion and debate rounds taking place at senior schools all over Britain and Portugal, respectively. Our Greek colleagues have succeeded in creating a TV commercial “Potent immune system for good health and better quality of life”, which was televised through a major TV station (see the accompanying article *Children, art and immunology*). As a member of the German Society of Immunology, I am particularly grateful that German immunologists have been extremely active from the beginning of the DoI

in 2005 and, in 2008, they have participated with numerous activities in major university cities such as Erlangen, Hannover and Berlin.

These examples emphasize that the DoI has become firmly established. I want to thank all of you who actively participated in the DoI 2008 in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom. I hope more immunologists will join us for next year's DoI. You may want to start thinking about it now, so that your activities are well prepared in advance of the DoI April 29, 2009.

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**Figure 1.** The cover of the book *Immunology for the Public* devised by the Japanese Society for Immunology.

## One small step for immunologists

This spring, the Japanese Society for Immunology (JSI) organized its outreach activity, “*Men-eki Fushigi Mirai*”, which literally translates as “Immunity, Wonder, and Future”, once again very successfully. The “*Men-eki Fushigi Mirai*” is a JSI-sponsored activity that started last year, in coordination with the Global Day of Immunology. This year, the “*Men-eki Fushigi Mirai*” was held for two days starting on May 3, at Nippon Kagaku Mirai Kan, the National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation, in Tokyo. To our happy surprise and satisfaction, the two-day event gathered as many as 4,460 people. During the two days, members of the JSI gave 28 short talks, and presented immunology by



**Figure 1.** Learning about immunology at a young age.

way of a variety of educational posters, videos and 'hands on' material such as cultured immune cells, live animals, hand-made models of lymphocyte–dendritic cell interactions and videos, in-line with last year's activities [1]. In addition to this event in Tokyo, we organized seven outreach activities in cities in the vicinity of Tokyo, which attracted more than 700 citizens. This means that the JSI has managed to directly communicate with more than 5,100 citizens through its outreach activities this year.

Additionally, the JSI extended its outreach activity in a new dimension by compiling a book for the public. The book is entitled “Wonders of the Immune System: how do we protect ourselves from germs?” (Fig. 1). The original idea of the book came from the educational posters we had displayed at our outreach activity last year; we thought that by refining and building on these posters, we could possibly make a book suitable for laypersons and even children. Based on this idea, two of the JSI committees, namely the Committee on Public Affairs and the Education Promoting Committee, started working together, and with the help of a Japanese science publisher, Yodosha, we finally produced such a book. The book explains plainly in the Japanese language what the immune system is all about. It is aimed at a diverse spectrum of people ranging from primary school to high school students, as well as adults. It has 69 pages with numerous illustrations, and consists of two parts; the first part describes how the immune system works, and the second part describes the role of the immune system under disease conditions, such as infection,

**Table 1** Table of contents of 'Wonders of the immune system: how do we protect ourselves from germs?'

#### Part I. The immune system

1. What is the immune system?
  - What is the immune system doing in the body?
  - Why do we not suffer from the same disease twice?
  - Where in the body can we find the immune system?
  - There are many players in the immune system
  - Three ways to fight against germs
2. The organization of the immune system
  - How does the immune system recognize harmful germs?
  - The immune system can protect us from countless types of germs
  - How the immune system remembers the germs it has encountered before
3. Where do immune cells come from and play their roles?
  - Where are immune cells made?
  - Where do immune cells do their jobs?
  - How do immune cells find their way around the body?
  - How do immune cells help each other?
  - How does immune system prevent its immune cells from overworking?
  - How immune cells tell the difference between bad germs and harmless things in our body

#### Part II. Diseases and the immune system

1. Immune system fights against infections
  - What are germs?
  - What are infections?
  - What is AIDS?
  - Can we prevent the spread of bird flu?
  - Are there limits to vaccination?
2. Autoimmunity is caused by the immune system
  - What are autoimmune diseases?
  - What are the types of the autoimmune diseases?
  - How rheumatoid arthritis comes about and its treatments
3. Immune reactions can also cause allergies
  - What are allergies?
  - Types of allergic disease
  - How asthma develops
  - Will we ever overcome hay fever?
4. Can the immune system fight cancer?
  - What is cancer?
  - Anticancer immunity
  - Making use of the immune system, “immunotherapy”, to treat cancer

allergy, autoimmune disease and cancer. A table of contents of the book is shown in Table 1.

Because the book was the very first attempt at such a project for us, the text and illustrations probably need to be refined by incorporating opinions on the book from the public. We hope, however, that this represents at least a small step for immunologists toward the global success of the Day of Immunology and we also hope that it will lead to a bigger step forward towards a better understanding of the impact of immunology in the public, as well as among policy-makers in the near future.

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## Children, art and immunology

The Hellenic Society of Immunology (HSI), a member of the European Federation of Immunological Societies (EFIS), has participated in the celebration of the Day of Immunology (DoI) since its introduction on April 29 2005. The DoI is a successful EFIS initiative promoting awareness of immunology among the decision makers from science, education, politics, as well as the general public [1].

In Greece, this year's activities lasted for almost two months, being held throughout April and May, and included TV presentations, press conferences, and newspaper interviews. In addition, two separate events took place in high and primary schools in Athens and Thessaloniki respectively.

A TV commercial informing the general public about the essence and the context of the science of Immunology was broadcast on national television and radio networks from the 21st to 29th of April (Fig. 1). The aim of the commercial was to inform and increase