

## **IMMUNOLOGY RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF NEW ENGLAND: COLLABORATIONS TO ADVANCE IMMUNOLOGY IN THE CIS**

The Immunology Research Institute of New England (IRINE), a nonprofit foundation directed by Lawrence DuBuske, MD, has been involved in sponsoring educational and academic activities in Eastern Europe, including development of clinical research projects for the past 17 years. Founded in 1989 by several prominent physicians, lawyers, and financial leaders from the Boston region including members of the faculty of several universities including Harvard Medical School and Boston College, IRINE has served as an organization devoted to advancing the science of allergy, immunology and asthma at academic centers in Eastern Europe.

The first activities of IRINE included providing assistance to allergy and immunology investigators in the late 1980's and early 1990's from Poland such as Professors Andrzej Szczeklik and Marek Kowalski whose careers had been severely impacted by the political crisis in Poland in time of martial law and the despotic rule of General Wojciech Jaruzelski during the last days of the Communist era in that country. These early activities were officially recognized by American governmental agencies including award citations from then Governor Michael Dukakis along with the legislature of the State of Massachusetts and later in a letter saluting the activities of IRINE from US President Bill Clinton.

By the early 1990's, the age of perestroika allowed many scientists from the Soviet Union to visit the United States. In the spring of 1993, a contingent of scientists from the current NRC Institute of Immunology in Moscow visited the United States, attending the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology in Orlando, Florida. New relationships were forged, including the beginning of a longstanding collaboration between IRINE and that institute through the efforts of Academicians Rem Petrov and Rakhim Khaitov and the scientific work of Leading Researcher Alexander Babakhin.

By fall of 1993, IRINE had formed relationships in Belarus with the Belarussian Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology whose critical immunology studies related to the Chernobyl Disaster were being led by that institute's director, Professor Leonid Titov. Collaborations were also soon developed in Kiev, Ukraine, facilitated by Alexander Markov MD and assisted initially by Professors Ninel Berezhnaya and Nikolai Kovalenko.

In Ukraine the activities of IRINE flourished in the late 1990's, ultimately growing to include research sites in Poltava under the direction of Professor Igor Kaidashev, in Kiev under the direction of Professor George Drannik, and in Simferopol and Yalta in Crimea, under the direction of Professors Vladimir Beloglazov and Oleg Bezruchenko.

Meanwhile, IRINE in the late 1990's continued to explore new collaborations in Russia, developing projects in institutes in Kazan, Tatarstan, under the direction of Professors Vera Tsybulkina and Anatoli Tsybulkin; in Moscow, including projects with Professor Alexander Chuchalin; in Krasnodar, under the direction of Professor Roman Khanferyan; and in St. Petersburg, including projects with Professor Alexander Emelyanov.

In the United States, IRINE conducted a series of Symposia after the annual meeting of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology in the mid and late 1990's featuring many scientists from the CIS countries including Professors Chuchalin, Titov, Khaitov, and Petrov, most notably including a symposium devoted to the "Immunologic Consequence of the Chernobyl Disaster" which also featured a presentation by then Ambassador from Ukraine to the United States, Dr. Yuri Sherbak, discussing the medical catastrophe of Chernobyl.

IRINE has developed seminars which have been presented at scientific meetings held in Russia, including the RACI and CIS Allergy Society annual meetings, and at meetings developed by Professor Revaz Sepiashvili including World Asthma Congresses held in Russia under his direction. IRINE has also continued to be involved in scientific meetings conducted by both Professors Sepiashvili and Khanferyan in Sochi and Krasnodar along with the presentation of scientific lectures in institutes in Ukraine and Belarus. Simultaneously, many research projects facilitated and organized by IRINE have come to publication,

including several from a multicenter latex allergy study conducted at many CIS institutes and a large number of investigations led by Alexander Babakhin and Sergei Andreev of the NRC Institute of Immunology. IRINE assisted the latter institute in obtaining a major grant from the United States government's Agency for International Development in the NSTC Program initiative related to the study of splice variant Interleukin 4. IRINE has also sought development of new research collaborations in Almaty, Kazakhstan and in Rostov-na-Donu, Russia, leading to recent international scientific presentations.

In the United States, since 2004 IRINE has developed a relationship with the Russian American Medical Association (RAMA), leading to presentations devoted to accomplishments of IRINE collaborators from the CIS countries at the recent annual meetings of RAMA in Washington, DC and in Manhattan, New York.

IRINE has been frequently involved since the late 1990's in the development of Summer Courses for young allergists throughout Eastern Europe in conjunction with the European Academy of Allergology and Clinical Immunology (EAACI). The first such collaboration was at the "EAACI Summer School" in Bialystok, Poland, followed by similar summer schools in subsequent years in Kiev and Crimea, Ukraine; Vilnius, Lithuania; Sardinia, Italy, and Sofia, Bulgaria. The Summer School in Ukraine was especially notable, as IRINE under the aegis of the EAACI brought together faculty from the United States and Eastern Europe and helped to facilitate a coordinated effort by the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology and the EAACI to produce the largest immunology and allergy seminar ever held until that time in Ukraine. The organizational skills of Professor George Drannik, President of the Ukrainian Allergy Society, and Professor Vladimir Beloglazov, Vice Rector of the Crimean State Medical University along with Professor Anatoli Babanin, Rector of the Crimean State Medical University, together with IRINE's Eastern European Directors Krzysztof Stepka, MD and Alexander Markov, MD, PhD, resulted in a spectacular week long conference dedicated to educating more than 100 young scientists largely from CIS countries.

During the last four years IRINE has been conducting symposia during the annual meetings of the EAACI where scientists from Eastern Europe present their achievements in allergy and immunology. This year IRINE held a symposium "Advances in Allergy and Asthma in Eastern Europe" at the annual meeting of the European Academy of Allergology and Clinical Immunology in Vienna, Austria. IRINE will conduct a similar symposium at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the EAACI in Goteburg, Sweden. IRINE is grateful for the intercession of past and current EAACI Executive Committee members and Annual Meeting Presidents including but not limited to Marek Kowalski, Tony Frew, Sergio Bonini, Ulrich Wahn, Paul von Cauwenberg, Jan Lotvall, Jean Bousquet, Kristof Nekam, Todor Popov, Johannes Ring, Rudolf Valenta, Ignacio Ansotegui and numerous others for allowing the contribution of IRINE to these meetings.

Currently, IRINE collaborates with more than 25 sites including investigative sites in Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, Macedonia, Kazakhstan, Bulgaria and Georgia. IRINE is active in the global arena sponsoring seminars, research and scientific presentations at many international meetings, continuing its tradition of promoting collaborative educational and research endeavors worldwide. This sponsorship includes production and display of posters at such meetings as the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI); the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI); the Federation of Clinical Immunology Societies (FOCIS); the European Respiratory Society (ERS); and the European Academy of Allergology and Clinical Immunology (EAACI).

IRINE was very pleased to assist the World Allergy Organization and its leadership including Professors Carlos Baena Cagnani, Allan Kaplan, Michael Kaliner, Johannes Ring, and Connie Katelaris in developing this major project of translating selected articles for the WAO journal into the Russian language. IRINE is very grateful for the leadership provided by Professors Sepiashvili, Khanferyan, Drannik and Kaidashev in bringing this project to completion. IRINE is especially appreciative of the tremendous assistance lent by Tatyana Slavyanskaya and Marina Tretyak from the CIS Allergy Society in Moscow, the tireless work of Ilona DuBuske from IRINE, and the direction provided by Robert Dimbleby of Hogrefe & Huber Publishers in making the Russian edition of the WAO journal finally come to publication.

The Immunology Research Institute of New England's goal remains to facilitate an interchange between American and Eastern European academic scientists interested in the field of allergy, asthma and immunology. The opportunity to help educate allergists and immunologists throughout the CIS countries through the publication of the Russian Edition of the WAO journal is typical of the efforts of IRINE to achieve these goals. IRINE is grateful for being allowed to be of assistance to the Russian scientific community and looks forward to continuing longstanding collaborations with immunologists from the CIS.

Lawrence DuBuske, MD