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International Comparative Virology Organization (ICVO)

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An increasing number of virologists, interested in *comparative virology*, have expressed a wish to bring together their many specialized disciplines so as to better address disease problems of man, domestic animals and economically important plants.

This interest, originating in early realizations that similar viruses infect diverse host species, was greatly advanced in the late 1950s and early 1960s by the first attempts at creating a universal taxonomic scheme. *Andre Lwoff, Christopher Andrews, Peter Wildy, Frank Fenner, Peter Cooper*, and many of their colleagues contributed to these first considerations for 'a system of viruses'. In 1962, a symposium on veterinary comparative virology was held at the New York Academy of Sciences; from this symposium a structure was germinated which grew into the WHO/FAO Comparative Virology Programme. *A Ian Betts, Hilary Koprowski, Martin Kaplan, Konrad Bögel, Charles York, James Gillespie*, and many of their colleagues contributed to the building of this program, which still serves as the principal international forum for veterinary virologic interests. In 1969, the First In-

ternational Conference of Comparative Virology was held at Mont Gabriel, Quebec, Canada.

This conference and subsequent conferences held there at 4-year intervals have been organized by *Edouard Kurstak* and *Karl Maramorosch*. These conferences provide an integrated comparison of all viruses and their interactions with hosts and environment. The first book on 'Comparative Virology' emerged from these conferences. In 1972, a Symposium on Comparative Virology was sponsored in England by the Society for General Microbiology; *Fred Brown* and *Thomas Tinsley* were the organizers. A year later, *Edouard Kurstak* and *Richard Morisset* organized in Montreal an International Symposium on Comparative Viral Immunodiagnosis. In 1975, an International Symposium on Viral Zoonotic and Epizootic Diseases of veterinary interest was held at the Institute for Medical Microbiology, Infectious and Epidemic Diseases in Munich; this workshop was held in conjunction with the inauguration of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Collection and Evaluation of Data on Comparative Virology. This Centre, under the direction of *Peter Bachmann*, operates with direct linkage to the

WHO/FAO Comparative Virology Programme. In 1976, Université de Montreal created a Comparative Virology Research Group. This Group, under the direction of Edouard Kurstak, organized in 1977 an International Symposium on Comparative Aspects of Arctic and Tropical Arboviruses. Nils Oker-Blom, Donald McLean, Carleton Gajdusek, Boris Semenov, Jordi Casals, Dimitri Lvov, Conrad Yunker, Paul Brès and M. Brummer-Korvenkontio were involved in the organization of this meeting, which stressed the urgent needs for virological investigations in rapidly developing polar regions. In 1977, in Rio de Janeiro a Comparative Virology Meeting was held, sponsored by Oswaldo Cruz and Mérieux Foundations, during which the present status of viral diseases of man and animals in South America was discussed. In the meantime, Martin Kaplan, Hilary Koprowski and Edouard Kurstak created a Comparative Virology Steering Committee; their efforts led to the creation of the International Comparative Virology Organization (ICVO)

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These examples illustrate only a part of the development of the concept of comparative virology; they also indicate differences in the definition of the concept, from one concerning narrow comparisons among veterinary pathogens (WHO/FAO Programme) to one covering the broad relationships among human, animal, insect, plant and fungus viruses (Mont Gabriel Conferences). These differences in the breadth of the concept have also been seen in sessions and workshops at various virology meetings and congresses, and in the several books and other publications on this topic (see references). In any case, with the passage of time, the concept seems to have become more and more comprehensive and valuable.

Substantive efforts are being made at present to bring the concept of comparative virology into broader practical application. A program of 'International Conferences on the Impact of Viral Diseases on the Development of African Countries' has been initiated with the help of the Canadian International Development Agency, the Mérieux Foundation and the Université de Montreal; the first conference was held in Ivory Coast in 1976, under the chairmanship of *Edouard Kurstak* and *Leon Hirth*. The second conference is scheduled in Nairobi, December 1–6, 1980, and will be sponsored jointly by the Government of Kenya and the International Comparative Virology Organization in cooperation with its ex-officio components. Similar conferences are projected in South America, where virus disease problems are similar in many ways to those occurring in Africa. The WHO/FAO Comparative Virology Programme is planning a conference to be held in Rome in late 1979 on zoonotic and epizootic diseases of the developing world. The WHO Collaborating Centre for Collection and Evaluation of Data on Comparative Virology is in the process of accumulating massive amounts of animal virus data for entry into a computer storage/retrieval system for general use. The Mérieux Foundation and Oswaldo Cruz Foundation are underwriting the creation of an Institute of Comparative Virology in Brazil. The implementation of a similar Regional Centre for Diagnosis and Prevention of Viral Diseases is projected near Abidjan in Ivory Coast.

Viral diseases of man, animals, and plants continue to have a great influence on the development of human society. This is as true in the developing countries of Africa, South America, and Asia as it is in the developed areas of Europe and North America. Virus diseases must be investigated and controlled whether they affect society directly or via loss of food and fiber animals or agriculturally important plants. We cannot mortgage the world's capacity to produce sufficient food, fibers and other products because of insufficient interest or effort in disease control. We

cannot accept the level of human suffering from viral diseases that we know to be the present reality.

In order to focus the efforts and interests of those working on comparative aspects of virology, the Comparative Virology Steering Committee, in collaboration with a group of virologists meeting informally during the Rio de Janeiro Comparative Virology Meeting and the Fourth International Congress for Virology, elected to create an International Comparative Virology Organization (ICVO) with headquarters in Montreal. This Organization would seek to promote coordination and communication among individuals, institutions and other organizations interested in various facets of comparative virology, based on the concept of the Mont Gabriel Conferences. The first example of interest towards ICVO objectives was the decision taken at a recent meeting in New York of integrating the Inter-American Virus Research Organization into ICVO structures.

The International Comparative Virology Organization will seek the means of supporting and developing a broad range of activities, for example:

the International Conferences on Comparative Virology

the WHO Collaborating Centre for the Collection and Evaluation of Data on Comparative Virology

the organization of diagnostic laboratories and centers of comparative virology in developing countries (in cooperation with WHO and FAO)

the organization of training programs for laboratory personnel, particularly in developing countries

the International Conferences on the Impact of Viral Diseases in Developing Countries (regional)

the creation of a 'Review of Comparative Virology' and the publication of books dealing with aspects of this subject

the coordination of activities between any interested groups dealing with unusually broad virologic relationships (e.g., insect viruses for control of vector-borne animal or plant virus diseases, or common ecologic factors among virus diseases of animals, plants and insects, etc.)

This Organization will also seek the financial resources which are indispensable for the realization of worthwhile objects. The underwriting of projects and programs will be sought from institutions designated as ex-officio components of the Organization and from other agencies of governments, universities, institutes, and private foundations. In order to carry out these intentions, the Organization is directed by a representative Executive Committee, a larger Advisory Council, and four Function Committees: Training and Education, Reference and Diagnostic Services, Centres and Extension, Dissemination and Technical Information. Several well-known virologists (*J.L.Melnick, K.Maramba-rosch, H. G. Pereira, D. C. Gajdusek, J. Salk, J. J. Callis, F. Fenner, A. F. Graham, L. Hirth, M. C. Horzinek, E. H.Lennette, N. Oker-Blom, N.F.Stanley, T. W.Tinsley, F.Brown, M.Kan-toch, B. F. Semenov, J. G. Barrera-Oro, R. Casasolascoaga, P. M. Tukei, V. M. Zhdanov, Y. K. Inoue, R. T. B. Francki, R. E. F. Matthews, J.O.Bond, C.Hannoun, A.Fabíyi, K.M.Johnson, L. Mata, T. P. Monath, I. V. Per adze, S. Nejmi, C.H.Huang, A.J.Zuckerman, H.G. Schatzmayr, T. O.Diener, T.Muyembe, C.A.A. Quenum, T.H. Work, P.Brès, G.Barbanti-Brodano, L. Chiarappa, C.A.Palacios, and others*) have agreed to serve within the Organization.

At this time, the Committee is soliciting the interest and involvement of virologists. Com-
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ments or criticisms are welcome. This Organization is conceived to be one of action; it is the enthusiasm and participation of working virologists which will determine its success.

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