2016 World Life Science Conference

Catherine Geissler, Professor Emerita of Human Nutrition, King’s College London

Professor Catherine Geissler, IUNS Secretary General, was invited to co-chair a Chinese Nutrition Society symposium and present a paper at the World Life Science Conference in Beijing, 1–3 November 2016. The conference was organized by the China Association of Science and Technology and the China Union of Life Science Society and was held in the impressive conference center of the Olympic Park, close to the famous Bird’s Nest Olympic Stadium. Eighteen life science societies took part, each with its own symposium program. In addition there were 18 plenary speakers, including an extraordinary number of World Prize winners – 13 Nobel Laureates in Physiology or Medicine (David Baltimore 1975, Bengt Samuelsson 1982, Erwin Neher 1991, Jules Hoffman 2011, Youyou Tu 2015), or Chemistry (Johann Deisenhofer 1988, Robert Huber 1988, Karl Barry Sharpless 2001, Kurt Wüthrich 2002, Venkatramen Ramakrishnan 2009, Ada Yonath 2009, Brian Koblika 2012, Robert Eric Betzig 2014), and 3 World Food Prize Laureates (Longping Yuan 2004, Marc Van Montagu 2013, Robert Fraley 2013) and 3 Wolf Prize Laureates in Agriculture (Longping Yuan 2001, Roger Beachy 2001, Karl Barry Sharpless 2011).

The Chinese Nutrition Society under the leadership of the President, Professor Yuexin Yang, had organized two afternoon symposia, the first on the topic of ‘Bioactives: New Function and Human Health’. The first speaker was Yuexin Yang of the National Institute for Nutrition and Health, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, China, on ‘Health Effect and Antioxidants of Traditional Plants and Phytochemicals’. She was followed by Yan Chen of the Institute for Nutritional Sciences, SIBS, Chinese Academy of Sciences, China, on the topic of ‘From Precision Medicine to Precision Public Health and Nutrition’ (more commonly called personalized medicine or nutrition); Fudi Wang of Zhejiang University, China, on ‘Discovery of Bioactives in Iron Homeostasis’; Xiang-Dong Wang from the USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University, USA, on ‘Anti-Inflammatory and Anti-Carcinogenic Properties of Carotenoids: Implications for Chronic Disease Prevention’; Bernd Stahl from Danone Nutricia Research, Netherlands, on ‘Nutrition of Mothers and Young Children in the First 1,000 Days: Learnings from Human Milk and What to Apply?'; Oran Kwon of Ewha Womans University, Korea, on ‘Application of Omics to Phytonutrient Studies for Health’; Hui Xia of the School of Public Health, Southeast University, China, on ‘Metabolomics Influence of LBP (Lycium barbarum polysaccharide) among Diabetic Rats and Healthy Young Population’; Chao Gao of the National Institute for Nutrition and Health, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, China, on ‘Intense Exercise Increases NF-kB Activity in Liver: Regulatory Effects of Quercetin’. The symposium was summarized at the end and closed by Professor Yuexin Yang.
The second symposium, on the following day, was entitled 'Life Cycle and Health, Sustainable Development', co-chaired by Xiaoguang Yang and Catherine Geissler, who was the first speaker, on the topic of 'Science to Public Health Nutrition Action'. She was followed by Xiaoguang Yang of the National Institute for Nutrition and Health, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, China, who discussed 'Health China – the Nutrition Challenges and Opportunities'; Sally Poppitt from the University of Auckland, New Zealand, who described the NZ National Science Challenge High Value Nutrition Program: 'Peak Nutrition for Metabolic Health (PANaMAH)'; Yumei Zhang of the School of Public Health, Peking University, China, on 'Nutrition in Early Life Stage and Health – Enlightenment from Nutrition Survey on Urban Maternal and Infants and Children'; Ying Li of Harbin Medical University, China, was unable to attend but her colleague presented her talk on 'Prenatal Exposure to Famine and Blood Lipid Profile in Adulthood: a Population-Based Study of Families in Consecutive Generations in Suihua, China'; Simin Liu from Brown University, USA, discussed ‘Incorporating 6P Analytics to Improve Global Health: Prediction, Precision, Prevention, Personalized, Population and Policy’. These talks were followed by brief presentations by three young scientists: Wei Yang of the School of Public Health, Tongji Medical College, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, China, spoke on 'Dietary Phytochemicals Decelerate Aging and Prolong Longevity: Current Sights and Future Challenges'; Qiuzhen Wang of the Nutrition Institute, Qingdao University, China, on the 'Double Burden of Tuberculosis and Diabetes – the Role of Nutrition'; and Jiajie Zang of Shanghai Municipal Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, China, on 'Iodine of Shanghai Residents and Universal Salt Iodization (USI) Evaluation Indicators'. Catherine Geissler summarized the symposium at the end.

Professor Geissler first collaborated with Chinese scientists about 1985 and was impressed by the extraordinary progress China has made in science over the last 30 years. The modern architecture of the conference center and the new road networks and ring roads are also striking. This development has of course had many costs including the displacement of population, and the pervasive air pollution.