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ISFG Announcements

General assembly of the English Speaking Working Group 2009

The general assembly of the English Speaking Working Group was held on 17 September 2009 during the 23rd International Congress of the International Society for Forensic Genetics in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Approximately 50 members attended the meeting. The results of the Paternity Testing Workshop were presented by Susanne L. Friis. The PTW was conducted by the Section of Forensic Genetics, Department of Forensic Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Copenhagen, Denmark. A total of 62 laboratories participated. The results demonstrated a high degree of uniformity.

The board of the ESWG was re-elected (chairman: Niels Morling, Copenhagen; secretary: Denise Syndercombe Court, London; treasurer: Bertil Lindblom, Linköping).

The next meeting of the ESWG will be held in 2010 in Sweden (organizer: Bertil Lindblom and co-workers). The time and place will be announced later at <http://www.isfg.org>.

Niels Morling, Copenhagen
Chairman of the ESWG

GEP-ISFG 2009 meeting

On September 14th–15th, the Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Working Group of the ISFG celebrated its annual meeting in Buenos Aires (Argentina). The organizers of the meeting were the same as the ISFG meeting, that is, Eduardo Raimondi and Ulises Toscanini from the prestigious Fundación Favaloro in Buenos Aires. As usual, the main goals of the meeting were the following:

- To discuss the results of the annual Collaborative Exercise. This year 120 labs participated in the exercise.
- To present the results of the different Working Commissions of the GEP-ISFG and to propose new studies.
- To hold the general assembly of the GEP-ISFG.

GEP-ISFG 2009 Collaborative Exercise

This year, the GEP-ISFG Collaborative Exercise consisted of two parts:

- Paternity exercise: analysis of 4 blood samples, and calculation of a theoretical paternity test consisting of a father-son duo with one inconsistency between them (a possible silent allele or a one-step mutation)
- Forensic exercise: analysis of two unknown samples (a blood mixture and a hair shaft sample contaminated with blood) and a reference sample to compare with them.

In addition, two optional paper challenges included in the Collaborative Exercise were discussed. The first one consisted of a paternity case (typical trio father-mother-son) showing 3 inconsistencies (one possible paternal mutation or silent allele and two possible mutations of ambiguous origin). The second one consisted of the evaluation of a genetic match between two unknown samples collected in two different cases of robberies.

The exercise is always coordinated by the Quality Assurance Service of the National Institute of Toxicology and Forensic Sciences in Madrid. In our exercise, the labs can analyze any type of DNA marker and consensus is considered when at least 6 labs analyze the same marker and there is an agreement of at least 70% of the results. As coordinator, Josefina Gómez presented a general view of the results and deeper discussions on each part of the exercise were carried out with participation open to all the people attending. The discussions were conducted by:

- Julia García-Hirschfeld and Iñaki Yurrebaso: autosomal markers (STRs)
- Leonor Gusmão and Pablo Martín: sex chromosomes markers (Y-STRs and X-STRs)
- Manuel Crespillo: mtDNA
- Elena Rivas and Lourdes Prieto: forensic part of the exercise
- Antonio Amorim and Miguel Marino: theoretical paternity exercise and paper challenges.

Working commissions of the GEP-ISFG

At the time of our meeting, four working commissions were active. A coordinator of each commission presented the work carried out during the previous year. Leonor Gusmão presented the results of two commissions: a population study of X-STRs in order to estimate the frequencies of haplotypes in different populations and also a study involving the estimation of the mutation rates per locus/allele of the Y STRs that are included in the Yfiler kit. Lourdes Prieto presented the preliminary results of the collaboration with the EMPOP database aimed at increasing the number of haplotypes and populations in this database with contributions from several GEP labs. Finally, Antonio Amorim presented the paper that was published about the results obtained in a study of mtDNA in dogs [1].

Following on from this, four new working commissions were presented and their proposals for collaborative exercises submitted for approval: one exercise on the interpretation of DNA mixtures (autosomal STRs), one collaborative exercise involving autosomal SNPs (a decaplex based on the publication [2]), another on canine DNA involving mtDNA and nuclear markers and a commission involving bioethical considerations about the use of DNA databases.

General Assembly of the GEP-ISFG

One of the relevant topics at the annual assembly was the vote on the proposal by the board for the modification of the GEP-ISFG statutes in order to adapt them to the Spanish Organic Law 1/2002, which regulates the Right of Association. This proposal included the change of the name of our group from GEP (Spanish and Portuguese Group) to GHEP (Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Group), which better reflects the actual composition of our society (with a high number of members coming from Latin American labs) and it is a more faithful translation of the English denomination. Other modifications dealing with the majorities required for passing a resolution and some minor changes were also included in the proposal which finally was approved by 217 votes in favour (>60% needed), and 6 blank ballot papers.

Also, the possibility that labs with no member belonging to the GHEP-ISFG could participate in the annual GHEP-ISFG Collaborative Exercise, proposed by the board and the exercise coordinators, was discussed and approved. Due to time and organizational constraints (including the requirement for the documentation and questionnaires to be written in English), the participation of external labs in the GHEP-ISFG annual collaborative exercise will hopefully be possible in 2011.

Finally, the proposal from Lourdes Prieto, from the Spanish Forensic Police, to hold the next meeting in Granada (South of Spain), sometime during the last two weeks of June 2010 (exact date still pending) was also approved. Before the next meeting, a workshop about an interesting topic for the GHEP members will also be organized. Details about these two events (GHEP workshop and GHEP meeting) will be announced on the GHEP-ISFG and ISFG websites.

Lourdes Prieto, M^a José Farfán, Antonio Amorim and Manuel López-Soto on behalf of the Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Group of the International Society for Forensic Genetics (GHEP-ISFG)

References

- [1] Barbara van Asch, Cristina Albarrán, Antonio Alonso, Ramón Angulo, Cíntia Alves, Eva Betancor, Cecilia I. Catanesi, Daniel Corach, Manuel Crespillo, Christian Doutremepuich, Andone Estonba, Ana Teresa Fernandes, Eugenia Fernandez, Ana Maria Garcia, Miguel Angel Garcia, Patricia Gilardi, Rita Gonçalves, Alexis Hernández, Gabriela Lima, Eugênio Nascimento, Marian M. de Pancorbo, David Parra, Maria de Fátima Pinheiro, Elena Prat, Jorge Puente, José Luis Ramírez, Fernando Rendo, Isabel Rey, Florencia Di Rocco, Anayanci Rodríguez, Andrea Sala, Joel Salla, Juan J. Sanchez, Dácil Solá, Sandra Silva, José Juan Pestano Brito, António Amorim. Forensic analysis of dog (*Canis lupus familiaris*) mitochondrial DNA sequences: An inter-laboratory study of the GEP-ISFG working group. 21 May 2009 Forensic Science International: Genetics. DOI: 10.1016/j.fsigen.2009.04.008
- [2] J.J. Sanchez, C. Phillips, C. Børsting, K. Balogh, M. Bogus, M. Fondevila, C.D. Harrison, E. Musgrave-Brown, A. Salas, D. Syndercombe-Court, P.M. Schneider, A. Carracedo, N. Morling. A multiplex assay with 52 single nucleotide polymorphisms for human identification. Electrophoresis 27 (9) (2006) 1713–1724.

Activities of the German Speaking Working Group of the International Society for Forensic Genetics

The scientific meetings of the GSWG take place annually in cooperation with the German Society of Parentage Testing. The German Society of Paternity Testing is an open scientific society. The last two meetings took place in Cologne in 2008 and in Hamburg this year. More than 100 participants attended.

The Working Group for DVI coordination was founded after the 2004 Tsunami and has been working since 2005. This Working Group has evaluated experiences of DNA analyses after mass disasters and published DVI standards this year [1]. The standards are close to the ISFG DNA Commission recommendations published by Prinz et al. in 2007 [2] with added specific characteristics for German speaking countries. Especially the experiences after the air crash in Lukla highlighted the importance of such standards. The standards were presented to the members attending the GSWG assembly during the 23rd World Congress of the ISFG. The executive committee of the GSWG was reelected at this meeting in Buenos Aires.

Rüdiger Lessig, Leipzig
Chairman of the GSWG

References

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- [2] M. Prinz, A. Carracedo, W.R. Mayr, N. Morling, T.J. Parsons, A. Sajantila, R. Scheithauer, H. Schmitter, P.M. Schneider, DNA Commission of the International Society for Forensic Genetics (ISFG): Recommendations regarding the role of forensic genetics for disaster victim identification (DVI). Forensic Sci Int. Genet. 1 (2007) 3–12.

The 23rd International ISFG Congress

The 23rd International Congress of the International Society for Forensic Genetics was held from 15 to 18 September 2009 in Puerto Madero, Buenos Aires, Argentina. The president of the congress was Professor Eduardo Raimondi, Favaloro Foundation Immunogenetics (PRICAI), Buenos Aires, Argentina. Before the congress, educational workshops were held 14 to 15 August 2009.

The educational workshops were: Genetic information on the web (Organizer: Chris Phillips), Interpretation of DNA profiles (Organizer: Peter Gill), Mitochondrial DNA and EMPOP (Organizer: Walther Parson), Y chromosome markers and YHRD (Organizer: Lutz Roewer), Fundamentals of capillary electrophoresis (Organizer: John Butler), Everything you need to know about validation (Organizer: John Butler), DNA and the missing: Practice, progress and perspectives (Organizer: Tom Parsons). Each of the educational workshops was attended by 50 – 100 participants.

The scientific programme of the congress began on 15 August 2009 with a lecture on "The X-Chromosome in Forensic Genetics" given by Reinhard Szibor (Magdeburg, Germany), who had been awarded the ISFG Scientific Prize in 2007. Five invited speakers, 41 selected oral presentations and 317 posters, as well as almost 600 participants from more than 60 countries made the congress a great success. The executive board of the ISFG awarded a prize for the best oral presentation to Ana Freire-Aradas (1), and the prize for the best poster was given to Peter Vallone (2). The ISFG Scientific Prize 2009 was awarded to Antonio Salas from the University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain, for his outstanding research on the genetic variability of human mitochondrial DNA polymorphisms. Dr. Salas will give his prize lecture at the 24th International Congress of the ISFG, which will take place in Vienna, Austria, from August 24 to September 3, 2011. The congress will be hosted by Professor Wolfgang R. Mayr from the Medical University Vienna.

More than 250 short articles from the congress will be published in the Forensic Science International: Genetics Supplement Series. This volume with the proceedings of the ISFG congress will be published online and will be freely available to all readers (3).

Niels Morling, Copenhagen
ISFG President

(1) Ana Freire-Aradas¹, Manuel Fondevila¹, Christopher Phillips¹, Peter Gill², Lourdes Prieto³, Ángel Carracedo¹, María Victoria Lareu¹, ¹Forensic Genetics Unit, Institute of Legal Medicine, University of Santiago de Compostela, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, ²Centre for Forensic Science, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, United Kingdom, ³University Institute of Research Police Sciences (IUICP), DNA Laboratory, Comisaría General de Policía Científica, Madrid, Spain: A New SNP Assay for Human Identification of Highly Degraded DNA.

(2) Peter Vallone¹, Carolyn Hill¹, Daniele Podini², John Butler¹, ¹U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology, Maryland, United States, ²The George Washington University, Washington D.C., United States: Rapid Amplification of Commercial STR Typing Kits.

(3) <http://www.fsigeneticssup.com/>

The ISFG Website

A number of new features have been added to the ISFG website (<http://www.isfg.org>). A direct link to the online version of the Society's journal Forensic Science International: Genetics has been introduced in the members' area on the page "Journal Access". Using this link the ISFG members are connected to the journal's website without additional verification or password, and may read and download all articles of the journal.

Furthermore, the ISFG members can pay the annual membership fee online by credit card (MasterCard or VISA). A secure link to a bank website has been integrated into the "personal profile" page of each member. Using a simple "one click" button, the secure payment site of the bank opens, and the payment can be performed directly. After the payment, a confirmation is sent by email, including a PDF document with a receipt and all payment details.

To use these online services, the ISFG members must activate their personal user account. To do this, please visit the ISFG website and click on "Get access" on the top right of the home page. For identification, the last name, the ISFG membership number, and a valid email address is required. To help with this procedure, step-by-step instructions can be downloaded from the "News" section, as well as from the "Working group" pages in English, German, Spanish, and Portuguese languages.

Peter M. Schneider, Cologne