



Researchers from the Medical Faculty of the University of Heidelberg got together with EMBL scientists on 27 November for the 5th Molecular Medicine Partnership Unit (MMPU) Research Day.

Students and postdocs from the ten MMPU groups – five of which are at EMBL and five at the university – presented their recent findings in blood diseases, cystic fibrosis, early cancer detection, iron homeostasis and cholesterol regulation. The partnership, which was set up in 2002 by EMBL's Matthias Hentze and Andreas Ku-

The MMPU Research Day: What did you think?



"It's a good opportunity to hear results from the other groups and see how we might collaborate in the future. It's also really nice to be in this new ATC building!" – Markus

Mall, MMPU group leader, Heidelberg University



"The open day has provided an opportunity for students in the MMPU groups to present their data in a relaxed atmosphere, despite the very tight schedule!" – Heiko

Runz, MMPU group leader, Heidelberg University

Open doors at the MMPU

lozik from the Angelika-Lautenschläger Hospital for Children and Adolescents at Heidelberg University, aims to strengthen the link between molecular research and medicine by combining studies of the basis of common human diseases with applications in diagnosis and therapy.

"The MMPU Research Day, while always a public meeting, has grown to be something much more like a conference," says Britta Schläger, consultant in the Hentze group. "This concentration on childhood and adolescent diseases makes the essential basic research that we do at EMBL more understandable and more immediately significant to the wider, non-scientific community."



"I'm used to always talking to clinicians, so an audience of basic researchers is a real change. The MMPU bridges the gap between the two very effectively." – Guest

speaker Stefan Pfister, DKFZ



"It's a great way for me to get some insights into the work of the MMPU, as I'm planning to join Heiko's group downtown as a postdoc." – Carolina

Tangemo, EMBL PhD student, Pepperkok team

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In October European Learning Laboratory for the Life Sciences (ELLS) officers Rossana De Lorenzi and new recruit Tommaso Nastasi from EMBL Monterotondo took part in one of Italy's biggest scientific outreach events, Genoa's Festival della Scienza.

In the hallowed surroundings of the church of Sant'Agostino, Rossana (below left) and Tommaso used a newly-developed activity, 'Naturally unbiased', to introduce some of the 200,000 festival-goers to the world of microbes. Participants were helped to observe microbes in their own saliva and from yoghurt, and then learnt about how sequencing is producing an ever-growing bulk of data and allowing scientists to discover new microorganisms and functions.



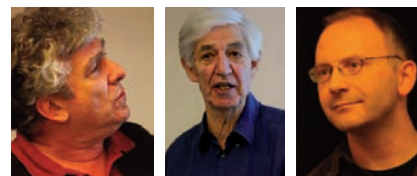
Building bridges: the Postdoc Retreat

Retreat (*n*): 1. the forced or strategic withdrawal of an armed force before an enemy; 2. an asylum for the insane; 3. period of retirement for religious exercises, meditation or study'. For the 84 EMBL postdocs who made the journey to Lago Maggiore on 4-6 November, their annual getaway was a combination of at least two of these three.

Held at the Hotel de Palma in Stresa, Italy – the midpoint between Heidelberg, Monterotondo and Grenoble – this year's retreat enjoyed a rise in attendance, especially from the outstations. As well as being a chance for postdocs to get away from it, all hear about each others' work and network with their peers, the event boasted distinguished and inspiring speakers in the shape of Lewis Wolpert, Miroslav Radman and EMBL alumnus Carlo Petosa. While Lewis sparked a very philosophical discussion with his talk on causal beliefs, Miroslav challenged the audience with his creative, high-risk research, and Carlo calmed frayed postdoc nerves with a comforting story of how a *Nature* paper really gets written.

The location certainly lent itself to relaxation and reflection. When they weren't busy in the scientific sessions, the postdocs enjoyed several dips in the hotel's panoramic jacuzzi, as well as a boat trip to neighbouring islands. "It presented all the eerie charm of a deserted tourist trap off-season, and was even devoid of locals," comments Remco Loos. "It's not every day your conference poster gets reflected in a set of gold-framed baroque mirrors," adds Aidan Budd.

"The overwhelming success of this year's retreat is thanks to everyone lending a hand to make sure everything went smoothly," says Sebastian Glatt, who led the organising committee. "I'd also like to thank EICAT for covering the rise in attendance so that we didn't have to be limited to 60 people."



Top: invited speakers Miroslav Radman, Louis Wolpert and Carlo Petosa; above, the Postdoc Association Committee; beautiful Lago Maggiore. Below: the 84 attendees



Photos: Jan Meldenbach