

World Mitochondria Society



Introduction Words by Pr Volkmar Weissig, President of World Mitochondria Society

The World Mitochondria Society emerged seamlessly out of a series of yearly conferences organized since 2010 by the International Society of Antioxidants in Nutrition and Health under the leadership of Prof. Marvin Edeas.

Six years ago, by chance I came across the announcement for the very first conference when I was randomly googling about mitochondria. A conference dedicated to “Targeting Mitochondria” and being held in Berlin, Germany, my former home country, certainly sparked my interest.

Just about a decade earlier I was drawn into mitochondrial research also by pure chance, perhaps I should better say by good fortune. I was screening a large number of compounds for their potential ability to inhibit mitochondrial topoisomerases, among them was dequalinium chloride. Having worked with liposomes for nearly two decades I noticed to my surprise that dequalinium chloride, a mitochondriotropic bolaamphiphile, seems to be able to self-assemble into liposome-like vesicles. Apparently, without planning for it, I succeeded in making cationic vesicles completely composed of molecules which are known to specifically accumulate in mitochondria. Perhaps these vesicles could be used to deliver DNA or any other molecules selectively to mitochondria? But back in 1997 being ignorant about the most recent advantages in the area of mitochondrial research, i.e. about the rise of mitochondrial medicine as a whole new sub-discipline of biomedical research, the question for me was why would I want to deliver anything to mitochondria in the first place? Quickly however I caught up, and equally quickly I completely changed the focus of my research interest. Fast-forward, I believe my students and I have been able during the last 15 years to make a modest contribution towards the development of mitochondrial-targeted pharmaceutical nanocarriers thereby opening new paths towards potential mitochondrial gene, antioxidant and anticancer chemo therapies.



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Having found a conference solely dedicated to Targeting Mitochondria I consider as good fortune, since until then I was attending meetings organized by a variety of Professional Societies which either did not care much about mitochondria or, on the other side, not much about drug targeting. I felt like standing between Societies. The Berlin conference organized by

Marvin Edeas gave me a new scientific home, where I finally could combine my old passion about drug targeting with my new passion about mitochondria. I am very grateful to Prof. Edeas for having given me the chance to become involved in the scientific organization of the Berlin Mitochondrial Conferences.

Over the last 5 years I had the privilege of meeting in Berlin a large number of renowned mitochondrial investigators in person for the first time, I also met many young investigators who are at the beginning of their career and I made many new friends. I am very excited about being actively involved in the efforts of elevating the Berlin conference series to the next higher level by founding a professional society the goal of which is to give mitochondrial researchers from all continents a platform to exchange and share data, ideas and opinions alike. Moreover, I feel extremely humbled and much honored for having received the opportunity to serve as the Inaugural President of the World Mitochondria Society. The future of medicine will come through mitochondria.

As our new society's first President I will work hard towards making this bold vision reality.

Pr Volkmar Weissig

President of World Mitochondria Society

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