

**ISAPP sponsors symposium at 2005 meeting of the
18TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF NUTRITION, 19-23 SEPTEMBER 2005
DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA**

Report filed by Gregor Reid, ISAPP Secretary:

For the first time ever, the Congress of Nutrition ventured to Africa and held its 18th International meeting. Set in a country blessed with beautiful scenery, deadly reptiles and animals, and cursed by the plight of AIDS and massive unemployment, it was difficult to venture safely beyond the hotel, yet essential to take in some Zulu and gamepark sights.

For Probiotics and Prebiotics, there was some activity with the launch of a new animated movie "So, which bacteria did you eat today?" Sponsored by Danone, the 14 minute educational tool will be made free (limited numbers) to people especially for teaching. It will have appeal to the young as the characters (a *Lactobacillus* and a *Bifidobacterium*) are fun, but also be meaningful to lay adults and university students and faculty due to the level of scientific content.

A symposium session, which proudly showed the ISAPP logo and acknowledged our input, featured five talks on probiotics and prebiotics. These provided insight into efficacy data, immune modulation effects and methods to recover strains after ingestion.

Several posters reported new findings, such as induction of alpha defensins in Paneth cells by *L. casei*. In general the level of interest in the topic was high, but the level of knowledge was still limited, once again emphasizing the need to convey to a wider audience what probiotics are, what they are not, how they can be used, what evidence exists for them, and how their potential can be optimized in terms of nutrition and in particular the AIDS epidemic. The work of my collaborator Kingsley Anukam, appears to be the first to show some benefits of probiotics in alleviating diarrhea and potentially stopping the decline of CD4 count in AIDS patients. This is one area where collectively ISAPP's researchers and industrial partners have to make more concerted efforts, in my view.



Dr. Irene Lenoir of Danone (and a long standing supporter of ISAPP) and Gregor Reid, Secretary of ISAPP, introducing the animated movie developed by Danone “So, which bacteria did you eat today?”



The photo illustrates how Scotsmen love to show off their legs while scientists from warmer climates (Kingsley Anukam from Nigeria) still find it cool (and prefer the sophisticated look) on the Durban beach!

Report filed by Kingsley Anukam, University of Benin, Nigeria:

Unless you are a government official or big-time business mogul, applying for a visitor's visa to South Africa from Nigeria can be a difficult task. However, thanks to an ISAPP travel support letter and other supporting documents, I was able to obtain a visa. Moreover, thanks to support from ISAPP, I was able to fly to the conference, and many thanks to ISAPP Secretary, Dr. Gregor Reid, I was able to get safe and comfortable accommodation.

This is the first time that the Nutrition Congress has been held in Africa, and with over 3,500 delegates from all over the world, it was an impressive event. Hosting the Congress in Africa is timely and really challenged many stakeholders, policy makers and nutrition scientists, both from 'developed' and 'less developed' countries on the need to make a difference.

Listening to the South African Health Minister at the opening ceremony of the Congress, I was almost moved to tears as he passionately chronicled the extent of the impact of HIV/AIDS, poverty and malnutrition on the continent. I confess to wondering about whether or not the UN Millennium Development Goals in reducing hunger and food insecurity in a region under siege of HIV/AIDS can actually happen. There were a number of local and internationally renowned corporations at the conference exhibition stands, and many 'goodies' were on offer from grain bars to ice cream, yogurt, candies and drinks. Naturally, such companies are profit driven and this is understandable, but within the context of the opening speeches and the African setting, it saddened me that

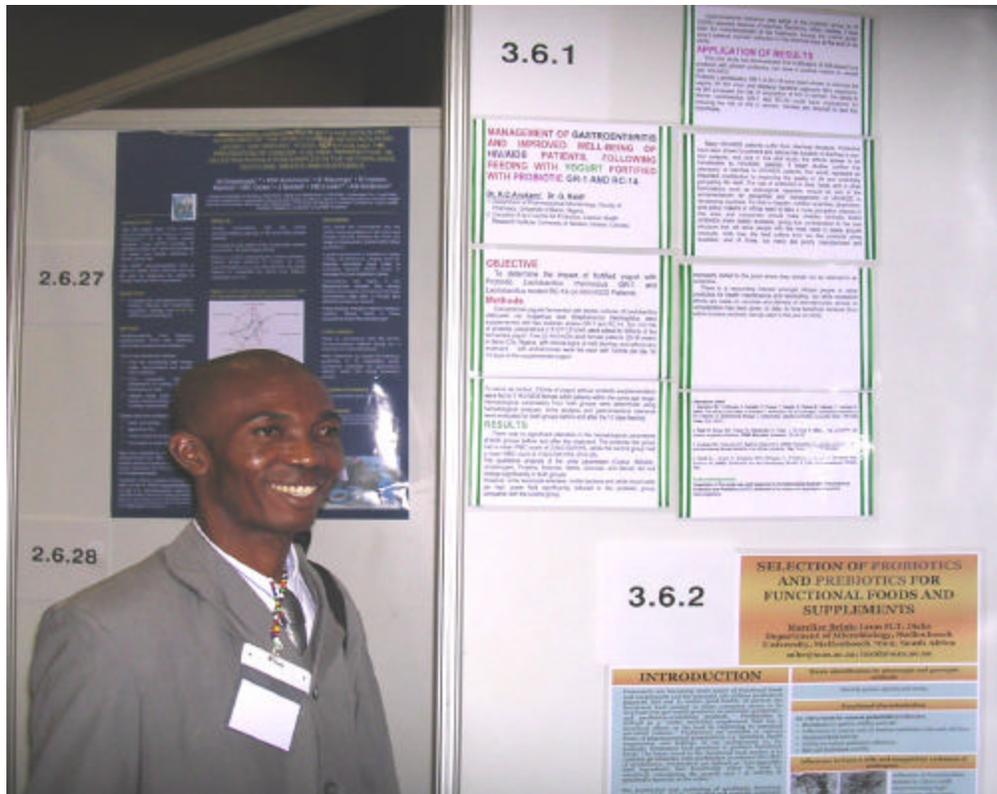
few foreign nationals are making any significant impact on the plight of people on this continent. Products tend to be high-end in cost, and not likely to bring profit levels met by sales in the developed world. The severe lack of probiotics in Africa is particularly concerning, as they clearly have an important role to play in ameliorating diarrhea and illness that plague the region.

Interestingly my poster presentation on the use of probiotic *Lactobacillus* GR-1 and RC-14 for the management of gastroenteritis of HIV/AIDS patients led to the gathering of 'Who is Who' in probiotics research at my stand, in addition to aid workers and African delegates who believe that probiotics can make a difference to the health and well-being of all citizens. This confirmed my perception that we need to collectively do more to bring the breakthroughs made in the developed world, to this continent. A food company that is based in the Netherlands discussed testing their probiotics on AIDS patients in a similar trial to the one I described. Time will tell if this comes to fruition. Although I have only tested 10 subjects, five with probiotics in yogurt and five placebo, it is clear that the probiotics have caused cessation of diarrhea, and we have preliminary data to suggest they can stabilize the depletion of CD4 counts. If the latter is confirmed, this will be an exciting development in the management of AIDS.

The concept of probiotics is an 'Old-New' idea that is gaining momentum across the world. Africa, from what I have seen, is willing to join in. This was exemplified by 3 out of 14 posters on probiotics were produced by African Scientists. At the probiotics symposium session, Dr. Gregor Reid was excellent as the international chair. The audience of 250 heard about the importance of strain selection, product quality, properly performed clinical trials, the potential for synbiotics, and the mechanisms involved in immune modulation. It was a very good session, and ISAPP was creditably acknowledged.

The launch of the DVD "So which bacteria did you eat today?" was a great success and Danone are to be congratulated for providing the funds to make this creative, fun and informative education tool. Over 450 DVDs were handed out, free of charge, to people from at least 18 countries. This tool will help spread awareness of probiotics and the importance of food and our inherited microbes.

The efforts of ISAPP to bring credibility to this area are to be applauded. It is not easy to change people's mindset and pioneer concepts that take society away from the drug therapeutic approaches that have prospered for the past 60 or so years. The next major challenge for ISAPP and its affiliated contacts, especially industry, is to integrate these teachings into the practical lives of people in Africa, and to lobby support for scientists to investigate local nuances of the microbiota.



Dr. Kingsley Anukam of University of Benin, Nigeria stands by his poster presented at the 18TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF NUTRITION in Durban, South Africa