ITS finally here! The first International Transplant Science meeting jointly organized by AST, ESOT, and TTS

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The Transplantation Society (TTS) has had a long tradition of hosting a basic transplantation science meeting biannually since 1987. In fact, in 2017 TTS hosted its 15th Transplantation Science symposium in Vancouver, Canada. In the past, TTS has collaborated with the European Society for Organ Transplantation (ESOT) to co-host the Transplantation Science symposia from 2009 to 2013 (Brussels, Cape Cod, and Paris). Most recently, ESOT collaborated with the American Society of Transplantation (AST) to co-organize basic science meetings in 2016 (Fort Lauderdale) and 2018 (Rotterdam), while TTS held its transplantation science meeting in Lorne, Australia, to better serve the Pan-Pacific region.

In 2016–2017, the chairs of the basic science committees of AST, ESOT, and TTS concluded that a collaboration to co-host the basic and translational science meetings would be ideal. This would avoid the fragmentation of a relatively small community of basic science and translational researchers in transplantation while attracting the best research in transplantation presented by key opinion leaders. Further, it would support broad and international networking opportunities.

These efforts have now come to fruition. The three transplantation societies are collaborating for the very first time to jointly organize annually held meetings focusing on the basic and translational science in transplantation, combined with cutting edge advances in basic immunology. This meeting, named the International Transplant Science (ITS) meeting, is scheduled to be held annually, alternately between North America and Europe. Each society will take the administrative lead for one of the annual meetings during the initial 3-year cycle.

The inaugural ITS meeting is scheduled to take place November 10–13, 2019, in Clearwater Beach, FL under the administrative and scientific lead of the AST. This meeting is organized to provide in-depth cutting-edge basic science with presentations by leading experts in selected topics in transplantation and basic sciences in a small meeting format with a retreat-like atmosphere to maximize interactions between attendees. Integrated time for networking should promote further discussion of new ideas, global interactions, and mentorship within this research community. There will be two Keynote speakers, Dr. Katherine High, President and Head of R&D of Spark Therapeutics, and Dr. Douglas Green, Peter C. Doherty Endowed Chair of Immunology at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital. There will be a total of seven plenary sessions, covering the latest exciting research in immunology, therapeutics, and transplant engineering.

We appreciate the support by the Boards of each of all three societies in this vision of global collaboration between scientists working to improve transplantation outcomes. Complementary to this cooperative approach, major symposia will be co-sponsored by other societies, including American Society of Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics, American Society of Transplant Surgeons, Canadian Transplantation Society, Federation of Clinical Immunology Society, and Women in Transplantation. This approach underscores the wonderful opportunity for all societies involved in immunology and transplantation science to participate and support this inaugural meeting.

As in previous meetings, there is a strong emphasis on the active participation of young researchers and clinicians in the field. Firstly, the tradition of the Virtual Global Transplant Laboratory continues, with a pre-meeting educational session on “Advancing Transplantation Science with single-cell analysis.” This session showcases the latest technologies in single-cell analysis that can be applied to cutting edge transplantation research. A limited number of Mentor/Mentee awards will be provided; these awards are designed to encourage the participation of future leaders together with their mentors at the meeting. An oral session is planned to allow every poster presenter the opportunity to practice their “elevator pitch,” generate interest, and entice the audience to visit their poster. Additionally, faculty-led discussions will be organized for an interactive poster session. Finally, there will be additional best poster awards, generously supported by the American Association of Immunologists.
Clinical transplantation represents a human experiment established >60 years ago that is “surprisingly” successful, even while many aspects of the underlying basic science remain poorly understood. Although transplantation remains the treatment of choice for end-stage organ disease, the results remain suboptimal. Clinical transplantation as practiced around the world continues to improve, and such progress remains heavily based on industry support. In contrast, fundamental paradigm-shifting progress is expected to originate from the basic and translational community, which rely heavily on government-funded research. This meeting aims to unite transplant research from around the globe, with cutting-edge science, to promote understanding and the nucleation of new paradigms to bring to the clinic. Finally, in embracing translational research and improving patient outcomes as additional themes, the ITS meeting will host presentations by transplant patients telling their transplant stories. We will also hear from Dr. Mélanie Dieudé, a scientist-patient advocate from Canadian Donation and Transplantation Research Program who will discuss how including patient insights has impacted her translational and basic research.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming present and future leaders in the field to this inaugural International Science meeting in Clearwater Beach, FL in November 2019. Where else in the Northern Hemisphere at this time of the year can you wear your flip-flops and discuss transplantation science with world-class researchers?