

From theory to practice or from basic science to sports: the 9th imMed retreat

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On a hot summer morning mid June 2014, a group of hardly awake im-Med PhD students went on their way to spend two days high above the lake of Biel. But when they arrived by cable car in Magglingen at the Sport- und Kongresszentrum of the Swiss Federal Institute of Sports (BASPO), everybody was widely awake and excited. What a magnificent scenery of all shades of green! Now it was perfectly clear why the hotel was called “Bellavista”: the view across the lake of Biel surrounded by rolling hills and the Alpes on the horizon was simply breathtaking!

The first day of the retreat was dedicated to human physiology and biomedicine. We were introduced to the world of mimivirus and its glycosyltransferases, and heard an interesting talk about the N-methyl-D-aspartate receptor during erythropoiesis with a nice insight into methodology: Pascal Hänggi explained what seems to be voodoo-science and which methods can be taken serious. Other topics were wake promotion through catecholamine-O-methyl-transferase inhibition and COPD and microRNAs.

After filling the belly with delicious food and lavishing the view, we heard that the endothelial function and HDL metabolism improved after a Roux-en-Y gastric bypass surgery in rat models of obesity – there is definitely no better topic to start the afternoon session. Afterwards, we learned more about other topics like amino acid transporters which possibly are short-term regulated by



amino acids, a zebrafish model for human kidney diseases and the anti-oxidative role of cytoglobin in podocytes as a potential association to chronic kidney disease.

After a quite strenuous hike uphill to a mountain cabin, the refreshing aperitif was ever so welcome. At the retreat award ceremony big cheers and congratulations went to the winners Daniela Spichtig (best presentation) and Nina Hochhold (best poster). The wonderfully warm summer evening was perfect for a dinner outside in the forest with a BBQ and a delicious dessert buffet. Thank you, dear fellow students who set up everything and grilled the meat! We had a wonderful evening getting to know each other, to interact and to chat about all the exciting biomedical research fields the PhD students are working in - and other things in life, of course.

The second day was fully dedicated to team spirit, competition and sports. In teams of six students (it

should be mentioned that Prof. Thierry Hennet was also participating) we competed with one another in cherry pit spitting, producing a “Happy” choreography, answering tons of questions within 20 minutes and various races around the athletic track. All students were highly motivated to win with their team, it was a lot of fun!

After a bit of recovery time the victory ceremony took place: Gold went to the “Cherry Warriors”. Congratulations again! It was a great pleasure and amusing to do something completely different together with all the imMed PhD students.

The morning ended with more outdoor activities such as beach volleyball, football or a tough lesson of body forming. The delicious lunch with a wonderful view was well deserved. Quite tired but in a merry mood we hit the train back to Zurich.

→ [Photo album of the 9th imMed Retreat](#)