Abstract

In late 2012 the members of the Environmental Mutagen Society voted to change its name to the Environmental Mutagenesis and Genomics Society. Here we describe the thought process that led to adoption of the new name, which both respects the rich history of a Society founded in 1969 and reflects the many advances in our understanding of the nature and breadth of gene-environment interactions during the intervening 43 years.

Historical foundation

A detailed history of the Environmental Mutagen Society (EMS) has been recounted previously [Wassom, 1989; Wassom et al., 2010]. The EMS was founded in 1969 by a group of distinguished scientists that included Alexander Hollaender, Joshua Lederberg, James Crow, James Neel, William Russell, Heinrich Malling, Frederick J. de Serres, and Matthew Meselson [www.emgs-us.org]. The goals and interests of the Society were and are to promote research and training of scientists in the fields of environmental mutagenesis and genetic toxicology in order to promote human health by minimizing exposure risks.

As a vibrant community of scientists, EMS proved to be fertile ground that quickly connected and expanded member efforts. A growing emphasis on policy led to a key 1975 position paper that highlighted the regulatory responsibility of government to identify potential mutagens before they are introduced into the environment [EMS Committee 17, 1975]. These and other member actions helped to establish the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976, which empowered the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to include mutagenicity data in regulatory decisions and served as a model for similar legislation worldwide [Hollaender

and de Serres, 1978; U.S. EPA, 2010]. Attendant needs for uniform testing methods and interpretations led to the seminal book series "Chemical Mutagens: Principles and Methods for Their Detection" [Hollaender, 1971] that included the first paper published on the Ames *Salmonella* mutagenicity assay [Ames, 1971]. Cutting-edge efforts in genetic toxicology, including computational toxicology, toxicogenomics, and high-throughput screening, continue to the current day [Mahadevan, 2011].

In parallel with regulatory and testing efforts, EMS has always been driven by research into the basic mechanisms of action of mutagens and their many varied effects on organismal biology and human health [Wassom et al., 2010]. Although initial interests centered on germline mutagenesis, the importance of somatic mutations to the pathogenesis of cancer was soon appreciated. Increased understanding of DNA, its chemistry and encoded information, and the many processes that manipulate and repair that information, collectively known as "molecular biology," led to more precise explorations of mutational mechanisms and, ultimately, a renaming of the Society's journal in 1987 from its original 1979 title *Environmental Mutagenesis* to *Environmental and Molecular Mutagenesis* [Hoffmann, 1987; Hoffmann, 2004]. In a continued progression of scientific insight and thought, members are now strongly engaged in consideration of not only the genetic but also the epigenetic and genome-level responses to environmental agents [e.g. Kovalchuk, 2008].

Motivation for change

Throughout its dynamic history, the name of the Society has remained singular and constant. To be sure, members consistently value the connection of the EMS name with the roots highlighted above. Nevertheless, in various forums over recent years, many members expressed

the belief that the words "Environmental Mutagen Society" did not capture a strong focus on mechanism nor the more modern sensibilities engendered by continued scientific insights into the nature of gene-environment interactions. Similar discussions were occurring within the International Association of Environmental Mutagen Societies (IAEMS), leading to a position paper that argued for a change in name [DeMarini and De Flora, 2010]. The Society name was the focus of a well-attended "Town Hall Meeting" at the 42nd EMS Annual Meeting in 2011 in Montreal, Canada. The broad interest and strong opinions of the attendees led to the establishment of a Task Force to address the name change issue through a more formal process.

Brand Identity Task Force

The EMS Brand Identity Task Force was comprised of active Society members representing a diversity of demographics, scientific interests, and opinions on the name issue. Its scope was broadly defined as all mechanisms used by the Society to communicate and advertise our mission and activities, including but not limited to the Society name. The Task Force restricted its activities to the North American EMS, the membership base we represented, but we were mindful that our actions were of potential interest to the international community. The Task Force had the following specific objectives: (i) to establish a database of member opinions and input on important brand identity issues, (ii) to identify and build membership consensus on the Society's mission, and (iii) to use the assembled information to generate specific and actionable recommendations to the Society. Retaining the EMS name was understood to be one of the possible recommendations.