

Institute of Immunology and Experimental Therapy

Institute of Immunology and Experimental Therapy in Wrocław nowadays boasts 175 employees, including 21 professors (both full and associate)



R. Mieczysławski

Continuing Hirszfeld's Legacy

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In recognition of the quality of research the European Commission awarded our Institute the status of a Center of Excellence

The Institute of Immunology and Experimental Therapy (IET), Polish Academy of Sciences, was founded in Wrocław, Poland, in 1952 by Ludwik Hirszfeld, a world-famous Polish serologist, immunologist, and physician. The following directors have successively stood at the helm of the IET: Prof. Ludwik Hirszfeld (1952-54), Prof. Stefan Ślopek (1954-85), Prof. Marian Mordarski (1985-98), and

Prof. Andrzej Górski (since 1999). The Institute has undergone various periods in its development, with a peak employment level of 430 persons coming in the mid-1970s. At that time, the IET was a coordination center for immunological research in Poland and it established most of the collaborative links with European and American scientific institutions. The 1980s were characterized by a deterioration in Poland's economy, resulting in lower funding for the Institute and an approximately 50% decrease in staff. The establishment of the State Committee for Scientific Research (KBN) in 1991 opened up the possibility of applying for grants, representing a true turning point in the Institute's development. However, the overall funding of the Institute has never been satisfactory, a consequence of insufficient understanding for the needs of science.

Yet despite poor statutory financial support, the Institute's staff has succeeded in winning a significant number of grants in recent years. Selected achievements of

the Institute can be summarized as follows: 3727 publications (through 2003), 288 Ph. D. and 79 D. Sc. (habilitation) theses defended, and 43 professorships granted to the Institute's scientists. The IET publishes two journals, both founded by Ludwik Hirszfeld: *Archivum Immunologiae et Therapiae Experimentalis*, publishing reviews and original papers (in 2003, the journal was noted on the ISI Master Journal list with an initial impact factor, or IF, of 0.79), and *Advances in Hygiene and Experimental Medicine*, publishing reviews in Polish (appearing on-line beginning in 2004). The Institute registered 13 patents (including 4 international ones) in the years 1990-2003. The research achievements and expertise of the Institute's staff have been recently (1997-2004) recognized by the awarding of 4 international prizes and 13 international grants. The most important grants include: the Howard Hughes Medical Institute grant for the identification and functional characterization of novel genes and protein expression during the positive selection of T cells, STEMNET (the 5th EU Framework Programme), ALLOSTEM (the 6th EU Framework Programme), a NATO grant, another EU FP6 grant, and a KBN grant for research on bacteriophages. Three international conferences on bioethics were organized in Warsaw in 2002-2004, involving some of the most highly esteemed foreign experts in the field.

Research, therapy and education

The Institute also houses the Polish Collection of Microorganisms (PCM), which constitutes a major collection of microorganisms in Poland and is organized within European (ECCO) and world (NFCC) culture collection federations. In 2000, the PCM received the status of International

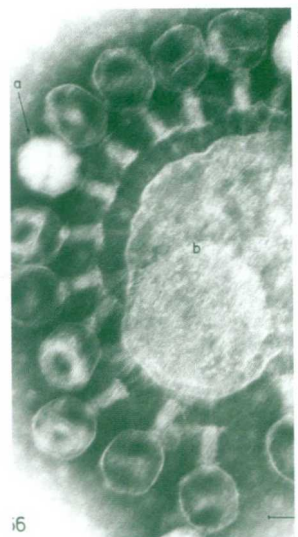
Depository Authority for patented bacteria and bacteriophages from the WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization) in Geneva, in accordance with the Budapest Treaty. The Institute has almost 30 years of experience in using bacteriophages to treat bacterial infections otherwise resistant to an-

tibiotics. Within this category of patients, a 80-90% therapeutic success rate is achieved. In 2003 a new Animal Facility, meeting the highest EU standards, was opened. The Laboratory for Bone Marrow Donors has received accreditation from the European Federation of Immunogenetics. This is the only Polish laboratory that has been awarded accreditation for HLA typing and determination of organ histocompatibility for transplantation purposes. In recognition of the IET's distinguished position, the European Commission in Brussels awarded the Institute the status of a Center of Excellence (2002).

At present the Institute consists of eight departments: Immunochemistry, Experimental Therapy, Microbiology, Clinical Immunology, Medicinal Immunology, Immunology of Infectious Diseases, Experimental Oncology, and Tumor Immunology. The IET currently employs 175 persons, including 74 senior and junior scientists, among whom are 10 professors, 11 associate professors, and 38 adjuncts. Many IET workers (16 in 2003) have spent temporary stays abroad at various institutions. Thirty-seven Ph. D. students are currently engaged in the 4-year education and research program, while over 100 university students are associated with the Institute in the students' educational and training program.

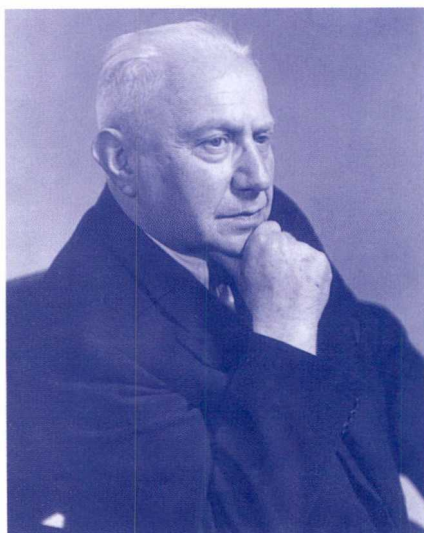
Hopes for the future

Our plans for the near future are to continue and further promote all the positive trends in the scientific development of the Institute. It is also crucial to maintain a balanced budget, so as to ensure the IET's credibility for potential investors and clients. Our recent, tangible achievements form a firm basis for such aspirations. Nevertheless, despite the great intellectual potential of the Institute's staff and their significant scientific output, the further development of the Institute will critically depend on adequate financial support being secured from either governmental or commercial sources. We also hope for better access to EU grants. The establishment of new collaborative ties, the implementation of biotechnology transfer, and the offering of diagnostic and therapeutic services to the community may also further bolster the IET's standing. ■



Our research includes studies on the therapeutic use of bacteriophages - viruses that attack and destroy bacteria

J. Mierzecka



Professor Ludwik Hirszfeld, a world renowned serologist, immunologist, and physician, established our Institute and initiated research that continues to this very day