

World's largest conference on infectious diseases highlights the rapid spread of "superbugs", new vaccine developments to meet the needs of the 21st century and how new diagnostics can improve patient care

7 May 2011, MILAN: As more than 8,500 international health experts gather in Milan for the world's largest conference on infectious diseases, top of the agenda are tackling the rapid spread across continents of "superbugs" that are resistant to almost all antibiotics and treatments, new revolutionary technologies in vaccines, and how new technologies are changing the way and speed in which infections are diagnosed that can improve patient treatment and care.

"The purpose of the European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ECCMID) is to share the very latest scientific knowledge to help the global public health community tackle the challenges we face in infectious diseases around the world. Now more than ever, in the face of alarming levels of antibiotic drug resistance and the emergence of new and virtually untreatable bacteria, as seen recently with the NDM-1 gene from the Indian sub-continent and the Balkans, we must pool together our experience for concerted and coordinated action," said Professor Giuseppe Cornaglia, President of The European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID) speaking on the opening day.

The Congress also has a special emphasis on vaccines, both current and future. This year's ESCMID Excellence Award is being presented to Dr Rino Rappuoli, a leading figure in developing cutting edge vaccines. Speaking at the Congress, Dr Rappuoli, Global Head of Vaccines Research for Novartis said, "Today, thanks to revolutionary technologies, we are developing safe vaccines to address the global needs of the 21st century society. These new developments would not be possible without the technologies we now use in research and development. Dr Rappuoli explained, "At Novartis Vaccines and Diagnostics, we are utilizing reverse vaccinology, structural vaccinology and developing new adjuvants (ingredients that stimulate immune responses to vaccines) to advance more than 20 potential new treatments for vaccine-preventable diseases through development."

ECCMID will also include a focus on the latest advances in new technologies and diagnostics of infectious diseases, an area that is a crucial part of influencing the care of patients. "The number of newly identified bacteria and viruses increase dramatically every year and in response new and diverse diagnostic technologies are being developed which means rapid and more accurate detection. This will improve patient care and help doctors to choose only the most appropriate antibiotics, and avoid useless or dangerous treatments", said Professor Didier Raoult, Editor in Chief of the ESCMID Journal, Clinical Microbiology and Infection (CMI).

ESCMID, a scientific society that reaches out to more than 33,000 microbiologists and infectious diseases specialists in Europe and around the world, organizes ECCMID annually to pool together global knowledge and experience to better understand and explore how to improve responses to infectious diseases by the medical and scientific community.

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