

The AMCA Young Professionals by Alex Chaskopoulou

THE GROUP

During the 76th annual American Mosquito Control Association (AMCA) meeting in Lexington, KY, an idea was born to bring together young members of the AMCA into a special group, known as AMCA Young Professionals (YP). The idea behind this group is to provide an opportunity to enrich the experience of young professionals in the field of mosquito research and control by promoting interaction among these professionals, and enhancing communication between young and well-established, experienced professionals. The formation of such a group is one of the best ways to encourage networking, while enriching awareness of opportunities in the field of medical entomology and mosquito control. The group will specifically aim to increase participation of young professional members during the AMCA annual meetings, increase their visibility and highlight their research and accomplishments.

THE HISTORY

Looking back to 2007, I remember how excited I was to attend my first AMCA meeting in Orlando, FL. As I returned home, I reflected upon what a great conference it was, but I also realized that I was left wanting more. Even though I had thoroughly enjoyed the highly informative and diverse presentations, the exceptionally great quality of the talks given by the students during the competition session, the high attendance and representation from the in-



dustry, the abundance of breaks along with the nice food and refreshments, and above all the fancy banquet, I had not had many opportunities to meet and interact with peers as much as I would have liked. I listened to so many interesting talks that sparked many ideas and questions, but I barely had the chance to meet and interact with the presenters! I attended the entire student competition and left without knowing any of the participants. So many interesting talks to listen to and so little time, so you rush from room to room, while in the back of your mind, you are trying to deal with the stress involved with the student competition... or wondering how many e-mails you have to answer or papers to grade once back in the office... You are young and new in the field, and on top of this, if you have a shy and reserved personality, it is almost certain that you will experience an educational and informative conference but you will miss all the fun associated with it! Since 1989, students in the field of medical entomology get together once a year to compete for the best overall research presentation. As my

esteemed colleague, and one of the 2010 student competition winners, Holly Tuten said "Why should we get together only to compete when we can use this opportunity to socialize with each other? At least it would make the meeting experience so much more fun!"

However, it wasn't until Dr Stan Cope proposed the idea of forming an official group that it all fell into place for the first time during the 76th AMCA annual meeting in Lexington, KY. A group of young AMCA professionals, including a majority of the students attending the student competition, scientists, and technicians from institutions such as the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), various mosquito control districts, and private research laboratories, got together to socialize and participate in various activities. One of the most notable activities was visiting the Entomology Department at the University of Kentucky (UK). We had the honor of being welcomed by Dr John Obrycki, Department Chair and Kentucky State Entomologist, who gave a brief introduction about their program and opportunities available for entomologists. Next, we visited the Insect Systematics laboratory, where Kacie Johansen, who recently graduated with her MS in entomology, briefed us on various projects, particularly the creation of interactive keys for Brachonid wasps. We then met with Katelyn Kowles, a PhD student in the Insect Ecology laboratory. Katelyn's interests focus on examining

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wheat agroecosystem food webs using a variety of tools. The Insect Behavior Laboratory was next, where Shelby Stamper, a Research Analyst, talked to us about their research involving pheromones and other chemical signals that insects use. Then Sarah Sams, a research technician, showed us their bed bug colonies and briefed us on the significance of bed bugs as household pests. And last, we met with two UK PhD students, Jimmy Mains and Phil Crane, in the Medical Entomology laboratory, an environment we were all very familiar with. Jimmy and Phil, already members of the AMCA YP, showed us their mosquito rearing facilities and greenhouses where they conduct semi field mosquito experiments. Their PhD research projects focus specifically on modeling and use of *Wolbachia* to regulate mosquito populations.

FIRST MEMBERS

Approximately 16 young professionals joined the group during the AMCA 76th annual meeting. Some of the young scientists present at most of the activities, their affiliations and a sample of their research interests were:

- Holly Tuten, a PhD student from Clemson University working on research to provide science with a better understanding of the potential health risks posed by mosquitoes interfacing with animals and humans in a zoo setting;
- Logan Minter, a MS student from University of Kentucky working with sand flies and investigating their biology so that information would be available for future use in IPM programs;
- Lee W Cohnstaedt, a postdoc-

torate scientist from the USDA ARS Center for Medical Agricultural & Veterinary Entomology working on mosquito and sand fly behavior and physiology in the presence of attractants, repellents and pesticides;

- Philip Crain, a PhD student from University of Kentucky working on quantification of the relationship between mosquitoes and *Wolbachia*;
- Jimmy Mains a PhD student from University of Kentucky working on impacts of endosymbionts on *Aedes albopictus* laboratory populations;
- Whitney Qualls, a PhD student from University of Florida working on blood-feeding behaviors and DEET repellency in Sindbis virus-infected *Aedes aegypti*;
- Sabrina Hayes from Florida



Figure 1: Members of the AMCA Young Professionals getting together to discuss activities of our group during the 76th AMCA annual meeting in Lexington, KY. From left to right: Whitney Qualls, Alex Chaskopoulou, Logan Minter, Holly Tuten, Philip Otienburu and Chris Stone.

A&M University, working on the isolation of *Bacillus* species toxic to several mosquito species;

- Philip Otienoburu, a graduate student from Ohio State University, working on attractive synthetic floral blends for *Culex pipiens*;
- Chris Stone a graduate student from Ohio State University, working on blood-feeding behavior of *Anopheles gambiae*;
- Bethany Swope and Martin Williams, research scientists from CDC;
- Kristine Styer, an entomologist from ICR Inc, working on insecticide efficacy testing;
- Amber Partridge and Gillian Anderson, entomologists from Colorado mosquito control.

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

To be successful in our field of work, whether teaching a medical and veterinary entomology course, conducting research

in the laboratory or the field, surveying and identifying mosquitoes, or promoting a new mosquitocidal product, one should have an open mind and be motivated to connect and exchange ideas with colleagues that have similar interests. We are professionals in the same field, with similar goals and ideas that could

flourish unimaginably if we all join together. Participating in the various activities of AMCA YP group will provide the opportunity to become friends with other professionals who have similar interests, and it is a great way to meet and interact with well-known researchers and specialists in your field of interest from all over the world. Those of us who are still students will also realize that our education does not end when we receive our degree. We continuously learn from each other as long as we keep an open mind and are open to sharing and accepting knowledge. It is often outside our classroom or daily working environment that great opportunities arise, and ideas are born.

SPECIAL THANKS!

I would like to thank Dr Stan Cope and Dr Roxanne Connelly for inspiring the AMCA YP and for being strong and faithful supporters from the very beginning. Also, I would like to thank Ms Sarah Gazi, AMCA's Executive Director, for the hard work she put into AMCA YP. Last but not least,



Figure 2: A group of AMCA Young Professionals members during their visit to the Entomology Department of the University of Kentucky.

I would like to thank the Board of Directors and particularly AMCA President Dr Janet McAllister for welcoming the idea of forming a young members group with such enthusiasm and for giving us the freedom to move forward as we see fit. However, it is all of the AMCA's young members and student's participation, and your willingness to help that can make this group flourish and provide some continuity from year to year. Let's not allow this group to come and go - let's make it a reality and an everlasting, valuable part of the AMCA.

77th AMCA ANNUAL MEETING ANAHEIM CALIFORNIA 2011

The first official meeting of the group will take place during the 77th AMCA annual meeting in Anaheim, CA. A professional session will be organized about

careers in medical entomology and mosquito control. A group of well-known specialists in academia, research, industry and mosquito control will enlighten us with their insight and perspectives on current and future opportunities, and possibilities that are awaiting for us in the professional world. Additionally, there will be a social hour, with ample opportunity to mingle and meet everyone. I hope to see you all there!

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Those of you who would like to become members of AMCA Young Professionals and plan to attend the meeting in Anaheim, please e-mail me at andahask@gmail.com and let me know. In the e-mail you should include your name, affiliation, title, and preferably a photo. Also, let me know if any of you would like to be actively involved to help organize our future activities. I thank you in advance for your participation and look forward to meeting you in person.

The AMCA 2011 Annual Meeting Why You Need to Be There

We're all still feeling the squeeze, both economically and politically. Now more than ever...

- ...we as members need to gather together to share new knowledge and techniques.
- ...we need to learn the most efficient and effective methods of mosquito and vector control.
- ...we must understand the politics that can and will affect the way we do our jobs.

To accomplish these goals we have to work together. The AMCA Annual Meeting is the only place where you meet face-to-face with hundreds of your peers and industry leaders at once.

Visit www.mosquito.org/meetings to start planning your participation now and making your case to attend. Hotel rates, estimated registration costs, and ground transportation costs will help you estimate your expenses.

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