

GLOBAL RANAVIRUS CONSORTIUM

ranavirus.org

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June 20, 2019

Dear Global Ranavirus Consortium (GRC) Colleagues,

On behalf of the GRC executive board, Amanda and I wanted to thank Dr. Ellen Ariel, Ellen's many students and staff, and James Cook University (JCU) for hosting the 5th International Symposium on Ranaviruses (ISR) from June 4th-6th in Townsville, Australia. By all accounts it was a smashing success even though it was a smaller gathering than past ISRs. The 5th ISR included more than 30 participants from 7 different countries taking part in 3 days of lectures, poster sessions, roundtable discussions, workshops, and fieldtrips (complete program available at the 5th ISR website: <https://rana2019.com/> and PowerPoint presentations available on the GRC website: <https://www.ranavirus.org/>).



Participants of the 5th ISR.

On the afternoon of Monday June 4th, the Executive Board met to discuss the state of the GRC. With the assistance of Dr. Amanda Duffus, Dr. Kuttichantran Subramaniam provided the treasurer's report (current balance is \$3,739.51); Dr. Jesse Brunner provided a website report, an update on the Global Ranavirus Reporting System, and a membership report (current GRC membership is 41); and Drs. Claudio Soto-Azat (South America), Ellen Ariel (Australia), Jesse Brunner and Thomas Waltzek (USA) provided regional updates. Finally, the executive board drafted four main questions to poll the ISR participants which are as follows: 1) What do you like about the GRC website and what is needed? 2) Should the GRC consider rebranding as the Global Amphibian Disease Consortium or the Global Iridovirus Consortium or continue on as the GRC? 3) What should the GRC accomplish in 2019-2020: Update the ranavirus book? Host another ranavirus online course? Host online workshops (e.g., phylodynamics,

Biosecurity, etc.)? Create a ranavirus isolate repository? 4) Are there ideas of where to host the next 6th ISR?

Monday evening, Dr. Ellen Ariel hosted an icebreaker social at her lovely home with the help of her many JCU staff/students.



GRC Executive Board members present at the 5th ISR including (from left to right): Drs. Claudio Soto-Azat, Ellen Ariel, Jesse Brunner, Kutti Subramanian, Thomas Waltzek, Qiwei Qin.

Tuesday morning, June 5th, Dr. Ellen Ariel opened the meeting with a greeting and then proceeded to introduce two excellent keynote speakers: Dr. Maxine Whittaker who spoke on the *One Health Paradigm* and Dr. Conrad Hoskin who spoke on the *Diversity/Discovery/Conservation of Australian Herpetofauna*. The keynote speakers were followed by a general session on *Ranavirus Disease Surveillance and Ecology* moderated by Drs. David Lesbarrères and Qiwei Qin. The next morning session was *Ranavirus Experimental Ecology, Epidemiology, and Diagnostics* moderated by Drs. Paul Hick and Matt Allender. After lunch, an afternoon session on *Co-infections with Ranavirus* was moderated by Drs. Jesse Brunner and Narges Mashkour. Afterward, Drs. Paul Hick and Matt Allender lead a roundtable discussion on *Ranavirus Diagnostics*. During the roundtable, a lively discussion ensued regarding the increasing number of ranavirus quantitative PCR (qPCR) assays that have been developed and how many GRC members are confused on which assay to use and for what purpose. It was decided that an *ad hoc* committee on diagnostics should be formed in an effort to

compare ranavirus qPCR assays through a ring trial. Drs. Matt Allender, Paul Hick, and I have agreed to serve on the committee; however, we invite other interested parties to contact us to participate.

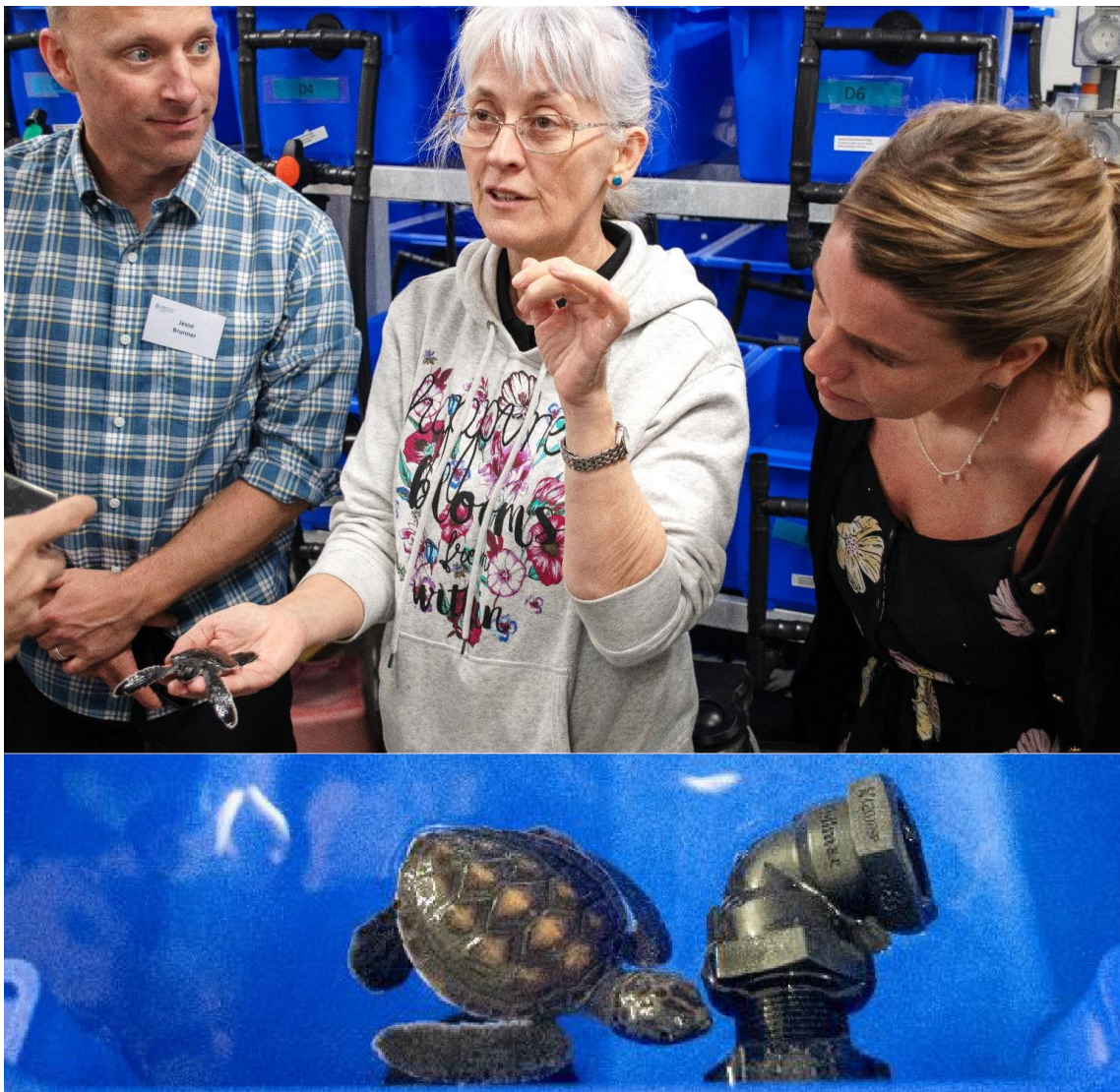


5th ISR speakers.

After the roundtable, the GRC General Board meeting took place in which we discussed the state of the GRC including querying the GRC membership with the aforementioned four questions. Regarding question 1 (website), the membership provided feedback that the website remains a convenient way to update membership, find information on the ISR, and connect with active ranavirus researchers. It was suggested that the website could have a link to social media outlets such as Facebook or Twitter to quickly share breaking ranavirus news. Regarding question 2 (future of the GRC), it was discussed that changing the GRC to the Global Amphibian Disease Consortium might bring in additional membership (e.g., chytrid researchers); however, this might also be at the expense of losing fish and reptile disease researchers currently united under the GRC. It was also discussed that several well established chytrid research groups/meetings already exist. Discussion on changing the GRC to the Global Iridovirus Consortium received considerable support as many other organizations focus at a higher taxonomic level (e.g., viral family such as the *Herpesviridae* or *Poxviridae*) versus a single genus, and thereby, attract a larger membership. Dr. Jesse Brunner suggested that a more comparative approach involving other iridovirus genera might inform/assist ranavirus researchers. A show of hands showed a majority of individuals supporting a change of the GRC to the Global Iridovirus Consortium. However, it was discussed that such a change should be discussed further with the broader GRC membership and any change in the organization would need to follow the GRC bylaws. It is worth mentioning that any such change would require changes to the website, bylaws/constitution, bank account, non-profit status, etc. It was decided that this would continue as a dialogue through the use of the GRC listserv. Regarding question 3 (GRC goals for 2019-20), it was mentioned that there might not be enough new ranavirus information to update the ranavirus book. However, the GRC hosting another ranavirus online course received considerable support. It was discussed that the GRC Executive Board would formulate a plan for the new course and then discuss with the membership through the listserv. It was also discussed that

a ranavirus isolate repository system would definitely assist researchers with different resources (i.e., isolates) in connecting with each other. Regarding question 4 (6th ISR proposals), Dr. Claudia Ferreira from the Department of Fisheries in San Paulo communicated her interest in hosting the next meeting in Brazil and Dr. Qiwei Qin from the South China Agricultural University communicated his interest in hosting the next meeting in China. According to the GRC bylaws, a request for ISR proposals is made within three months of completion of the last ISR, so please keep thinking and chatting about where we might host the 6th ISR! Finally, what are the big issues that you want the GRC to tackle in 2019-2020? The GRC wants to hear from you! Please contact me or any member of the executive board with questions or comments.

Tuesday ended with a guided tour across the beautiful JCU campus to see some of Australia's amazing plants and animals, a visit to see all the wonderful research Ellen is doing in her Turtle Health Research Facility, a delicious BBQ (scrumptious kangaroo!), and spotlighting on campus to observe nocturnal Australian critters!



GRC participants visit Dr. Ellen Ariel's Turtle Health Research Facility at JCU.

Wednesday morning started off with a session on *Ranavirus Molecular Biology, Immunology, and Pathology* moderated by Dr. Jacques Robert and Wytamma Wirth. Afterward I gave an update on *Ranavirus Taxonomy*. Updates included a review the ICTV Iridovirus Subcommittee changes to the genus *Ranavirus* including: Bohle iridovirus now being considered a strain within the species *Frog virus 3*, European catfish virus now being considered a strain within the species *Epizootic Hematopoietic Necrosis Virus*, and *Common midwife toad virus* now being recognized as a species. Additionally, it was discussed that the shortfin eel ranavirus and the collective ranavirus maxima/cod iridovirus/lumpfish ranavirus are under consideration as new ranavirus species. Another morning session included talks on *Biosecurity and Other Ranaviruses* moderated by Drs. Paul Hick and Claudio Soto-Azat. During lunch, Dr. Ellen Ariel had a special treat in store for the ISR participants - she hired a local wildlife ranger to bring all sorts of Australian critters in for us to see and handle!



Dr. Claudio Soto-Azat with a carpet python.

After the Australian critter potpourri was the *Biosecurity Discussion Forum* moderated by Dr. Ellen Ariel. In the afternoon, Dr. Kuttichantran Subramaniam and I gave a workshop on *Ranavirus Phylogenomics* and Dr. Jesse Brunner gave a workshop on *Modeling Disease Spread*. Afterward, Dr. Ellen Ariel and I closed the meeting prior to a fabulous dinner at the Townsville Yacht Club. After dinner, Dr. Ellen Ariel presented the student poster awards. Congratulations to Dr. Alicia MacLaine from JCU for winning 1st place, Samantha Koda from the University of Florida (UF) for winning 2nd place, and Dr. Preeyanan Sriwanayos from UF for winning 3rd place!

On Thursday, ISR members were led on an incredible tour of the Billabong Sanctuary to learn more about the wildlife of the Land Down Under.



5th ISR participants explore the Billabong Sanctuary.

Again, Dr. Amanda Duffus and I wish to thank Dr. Ellen Ariel, Ellen's many staff/students, and James Cook University (JCU) for hosting and ensuring the 5th ISR was such a success! We also owe a debt of gratitude to the ISR planning Committee (Drs. Amanda Duffus, Maria Forzan, and Ellen Ariel), the ISR fundraising committee (Drs. Kuttichatran Subramaniam, Amanda Duffus, Greg Chinchar, David Lesbarreres), and our sponsors (National Science Foundation, Association of Amphibian and Reptile Veterinarians, Australian Institute for Tropical Health and Medicine, FACETS, and the UF Emerging Pathogens Institute). Finally, I want to acknowledge my friend and charter member of the GRC, Dr. Amanda Duffus, for her extraordinary efforts in ensuring every single ISR has been a success. Last but not least, we would like to extend a huge thank you to all of the GRC members that came from around the world to participate in the 5th ISR and promote the GRC mission!

Sincerely,

Thomas B. Waltzek (MS, DVM, PhD)

Amanda L. J. Duffus (MS, PhD)

