Postponement of Frontiers in Cardiovascular Biomedicine (FCVB) 2020 due to COVID-19: a look forward to 2021

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A look at the frontier

Frontiers in Cardiovascular Biomedicine (FCVB; previously called Frontiers in Cardiovascular Biology) is the main biennial congress of the Council on Basic Cardiovascular Science (CBCS) of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC). It is a widely inclusive congress in collaboration with several scientific cardiovascular sister societies. By now, FCVB meetings are considered to be one of the most relevant exchange platforms for basic and translational cardiovascular biomedicine in Europe and beyond. The change of the name of the congress from Frontiers in Cardiovascular Biology to Frontiers in Cardiovascular Biomedicine was intended to reflect and emphasize the focus of these meetings being the facilitation of laboratory findings into clinical medicine.

Postponement of FCVB 2020 and details of FCVB 2021

The upcoming 6th FCVB Congress had been originally planned to be held from Thursday 23rd to Sunday 26th April 2020 in Budapest, Hungary. However, after a year and a half of planning and careful selection of a comprehensive scientific programme that attracted >600 registrations from all over the world, the conference had to be postponed due to the spread of the new SARS-CoV-2-virus-induced disease, COVID-19. In responding to this, ESC leaders and the FCVB core committee, including the local organizers, carefully followed and evaluated the pandemic situation that led to several restrictions in travel even within the ‘borderless’ Schengen zone countries of the European Union, including Hungary. With each passing day, we saw the rapid spread of COVID-19 that led to the cancellation of most flights, introduction of travel bans by government authorities, and closure of universities Europe wide. The Semmelweis University premises (including the venue of the meeting, Basic Medical Science Center of Semmelweis University) have also closed for students and non-university employees as of March 2020. Moreover, a ban on holding indoor meetings of >50 people has recently been introduced in Hungary (follow the daily up-to-date coronavirus situation in Hungary at http://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/coronavirus-heres-the-latest/).

As a result of these factors and our responsibility to protect the health of our faculty, delegates, and staff, the ESC leaders and the FCVB core committee agreed that postponing FCVB was the only responsible course of action. Fortunately, however, the ESC has been able to secure new dates and can confirm that our congress will now take place from Thursday 22nd April to Sunday 25th April in Budapest.

We understand that this may have an impact on the activities of your respective groups and societies, and we would like to assure you that we will endeavour to work together so that we can collectively support each other up until FCVB 2021.

The decision to postpone the meeting by 1 year was based on the fact that many meetings have been already rescheduled towards the last quarter of 2020 so this period of the year will be very busy with conferences, even if the pandemic will have largely subsided. Since FCVB is a biennial event, postponing it to the spring of 2021 will not affect the next, 7th FCVB meeting, due to occur in 2022. Moreover, ESC leaders and the CBCS decided to start negotiating with ESC Working Groups and sister societies to help organize satellite meetings in conjunction with FCVB, to help them plan their annual events and council meetings if needed.

Since the pandemic will hit the European economy with force, a joint effort of the FCVB may help with finding sponsorships, rather than having several small meetings.

What to expect from FCVB 2021

The scientific Programme Chairs, Professor Péter Ferdinandy and Professor Ákos Koller, and Professor Béla Merkely, rector of

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Semmelweis University are delighted to welcome you to Budapest for the 6th, postponed congress of FCVB. The programme of FCVB in 2021 will remain essentially the same as that planned for 2020; however, faculty and poster presenters will have a chance to modify abstracts and there will be a new call for Late Breaking Science to be announced in late 2020. Moreover, the programme committee will free up a slot for a session focusing on the cardiovascular effects of COVID-19. In the inaugural session, we will pay special tribute to Ignác Semmelweis, a Hungarian physician, who discovered the cause of puerperal (childbed) fever and introduced antisepsis into medical practice, the father of hygiene, widely attributed as the first person to discover the medical benefits of handwashing to prevent spread of diseases in the late 19th century—unfortunately more tangibly relevant now in the era of the devastating COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, Semmelweis University, currently celebrating its 250-year anniversary, was named after Ignác Semmelweis.

The aim of FCVB 2021 is to provide a very wide spectrum of presentations on novel basic science and the latest developments in new therapies related to cardiac and vascular biology and medicine. The scientific programme has been devised in collaboration with the 13 ESC Working Groups and sister societies involved to cover the most exciting new findings and to facilitate the exploration of novel areas. There are six symposia on cutting-edge topics and also 20 ‘featured symposia’ that combine selected abstracts with content related to pre-arranged sessions. Four of the featured symposia are joint sessions. Novel strategies related to the genetics of cardiovascular disease will be discussed in a session with the new ESC Council on Cardiovascular Genomics. There will be a joint featured symposium with the collaborative pan-European multidisciplinary network, EU-CardioRNA COST Action CA17129, on non-coding RNAs in cardiovascular diseases. We also welcome the Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand and the Japanese Circulation Society, and look forward to their participation in two joint featured symposia. We have a broad range of Keynote Lectures and symposia from molecular networks of the cardiovascular diseaseome, to mechanisms linking atrial fibrillation and stroke, extracellular vesicles, novel RNA therapies, network medicine and big data, and the mechanisms of drug cardiotoxicity, including hidden cardiotoxicity.

Pushing the frontiers even further, we have three Late Breaking Science poster sessions covering an interesting array of novel research ideas, including new biomarkers, new risk scores, and new approaches to help address unanswered questions in cardiovascular biology. Invited speaker presentations mixed with shorter talks selected from the best submitted abstracts will ensure the presence of the most recent data and findings via the strong involvement of younger speakers. The CBCS is proud to support our young talent, and we will have two Young Investigator Award (YIA) sessions to showcase their research, with the final presentation of the winners given at the Awards and Closing Ceremony on the last day. Also, the Moderated Poster Sessions consisting of hundreds of poster presentations will be an essential part of the meeting, where you can build your scientific and friendship network, in addition to the social programmes.

We hope you will enjoy your trip to Hungary next year, and please join us in helping to make FCVB 2021 THE major international congress for basic and translational cardiovascular biomedicine.

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Conflict of interest: P.F. is the founder and CEO of Pharmahungary Group, a group of R&D companies.

Authors

Biography: Professor Péter Ferdinandy is listed in the global Highly Cited Researcher 2014 and 2017 databases acknowledging the world’s most influential scientists. He counts more than 250 papers and 5 patent families. His work is cited more than 14 000 times, and his Hirsch index is 63. He received an MD diploma in 1991 and a PhD in 1995 at the University of Szeged, Hungary. He became a registered clinical pharmacologist in 1999. He founded the cardiovascular research group at the Biochemistry Department, University of Szeged, Hungary. He did his postdoctoral training for 2 years at the Department of Pharmacology, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada, as a fellow of the Medical Research Council of Canada. After his postdoctoral training, he returned back to Hungary and accomplished an MBA training, received an MBA diploma in finance and quality management in 2004. He founded the Pharmahungary Group, a group of R&D companies (www.pharmahungary.com) that have been involved in more than 250 drug/medical device development projects since their foundation in the early 2000s. He also continued his academic carrier and became the director of the Department of Pharmacology and Pharmacotherapy and the head of the Cardiometabolic Research Group at Semmelweis University, Budapest (www.semmelweis.hu/pharmacology) in 2011, and became vice-rector for science and innovations of Semmelweis University in 2018. He was the president of the International Society for Heart Research, European Section, and the chair of the Working Group of Cellular Biology of the Heart of the ESC. Currently he is the president of the Hungarian Society of Experimental and Clinical Pharmacology (www.huphar.org).
**Biography:** Akos Koller started his research work in Hungary after finishing the Semmelweis Medical School in 1969–1975. Then, he began to work on coronary and brain microcirculation with Professor A.G.B. Kovach. He moved from Hungary to the USA in 1982, where he was doing research at the Cerebrovascular Research Center at the University of Pennsylvania, with Martin Reivich and Britton Chance on pial microcirculation, regarding the role of adenosine, NADH level/metabolism, and spreading depression. He then moved to Tucson, Arizona where he learned from Paul C. Johnson all topics of classical in vivo microcirculation and engaged in microcirculatory network studies to understand the important complexity of the microcirculation. Then in 1987, he moved to Valhalla, New York and, with the help Gabor Kaley, he became an independent scientist. He has received several NIH and AHA grants which supported his studies on the function of microvessels of various tissues, the newly discovered vasomotor role of endothelium in vivo, and the effect of haemodynamic forces in acute and chronic conditions on the remodelling of microvascular function in vitro. He was one of the first (if not the first) who discovered in 1989 the role of wall shear stress in eliciting substantial dilation of arterioles and venules, and affecting the vaso-motion of lymphatic microvessels. Later he investigated the modulation of the function of endothelium by age, gender, exercise, and various disease conditions. In 2011 he discovered that increases in flow elicit constrictions in cerebral arteries contributing thereby to the autoregulation of cerebral blood flow, and clarified the underlying molecular signalling. He has published his papers in highly esteemed journals, such as the *American Journal of Physiology, Circulation Research, Circulation, Cardiovascular Research, Journal of Pathology, Hypertension, Microvascular Research, Microcirculation*, and *Journal of Vascular Research*.

**Biography:** Christian Weber is the Chair in Vascular Medicine and the Director of the Institute for Cardiovascular Prevention at Ludwig-Maximilians-University (LMU) Munich, Germany, and Van de Laar-Professor at the Cardiovascular Research Institute Maastricht (CARIM), Maastricht University, The Netherlands. After graduating and completing his training in internal medicine at LMU and Harvard Medical School, Boston, he was board-certified in clinical cardiology and appointed as a Chair in Molecular Cardiology at RWTH Aachen University. His group has a strong interest in the molecular interactions and pathophysiological functions of chemokines and immune cell subsets, as well as the role of microRNAs and their targets in vascular disease and atherosclerosis, while his clinical interests focus on developing novel biomarkers and biopharmaceuticals. He is the Spokesman of the DFG Collaborative Research Centre SFB1123 and coordinates the partner site Munich Heart Alliance in the German Centre for Cardiovascular Research (DZHK). Among many awards, he is a double ERC Advanced Investigator Grant recipient and Clarivate Analytics Highly Cited Researcher 2018 with more than 600 publications, with an h-index of 100/120 and more than 37 000/53 000 citations (Scopus/GoogleScholar). He serves as Editor-in-Chief of *Thrombosis & Haemostasis*, is Senior Associate Editor of *Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis & Vascular Biology*, is Chair-elect of the ESC Council on Basic Cardiovascular Science, and is a co-founder of Carolus Therapeutics Inc. and Cartesio Therapeutics Inc.
Biography: Professor Dr med. Johannes Ludwig Waltenberger, FESC currently serves as Professor of Internal Medicine, Cardiology and Vascular Medicine at the University of Muenster since 2011. In addition, he is acting chief of Internal Medicine, Cardiology, Vascular Medicine, Pneumonology, and Intensive Care Medicine at SRH Central Hospital Suhl, Germany. Johannes Waltenberger received his medical degree from Heidelberg University following additional training in Glasgow, Harvard Medical School, and Boston University School of Medicine. He received his MD (Dr med.) from Heidelberg University, was postdoc at the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research in Uppsala, and completed his residency training at the University of Ulm, where he received his venia legendi in Internal Medicine in 1997 and was Heisenberg Scholar of the German Research Council from 2000 to 2003. From 2003 to 2010, Dr Waltenberger served as Professor of Cardiology and Interventional Cardiology at Maastricht University Medical Center, and was Principal Investigator at the Cardiovascular Research Institute Maastricht. Dr Waltenberger was listed primo et unico loco, Chair in Cardiology at Karolinska Institutet/Stockholm in 2006. His scientific interests are focused on molecular mechanisms related to atherosclerosis, myocardial ischaemia, and collateral function. His clinical interests cover ischaemic heart disease, heart failure, and interventional Cardiology, along with ethical issues in Gerontocardiology. Dr Waltenberger currently serves as Editor-in-Chief for the European Journal of Medical Research, as Associate Editor of the Netherlands Heart Journal and on the editorial boards of, among others, Cardiovascular Research and the European Heart Journal. He served as Councillor in the ESC-Board in 2008–2010 and is the current chair of the Council for Basic Cardiovascular Sciences of the ESC. In addition, he serves as topic coordinator for basic science in the Congress Program Committee of the ESC. Furthermore, he acts as spokesman of the project group on Ethics in Cardiology of the German Cardiac Society.