



April 16, 2021

e-Volume Number 2  
Issue Number 2  
Spring 2021

### In This Issue...

1. [Great News! The Biennial Meeting is ON!](#)
2. [One Year of e-Symposia](#)
3. [Matrix Books at a Discount](#)
4. [Save the date for June e-Symposium](#)

---

## Welcome to SPRING!

Dear Members,

Spring is upon us and there is reason to have a sense of hope with this new season. Vaccines are more available, restrictions are slowly relaxing, and your favorite scientific event, the ASMB Biennial Meeting will be happening in September.

Read on to see what the ASMB has in store for you to keep us all connected until we can see each other in person again!

*Alexandra Naba, Editor-in-Chief*



## Biennial Meeting Update

The [American Society for Matrix Biology](#) is excited to announce that we will hold our postponed 2020 Biennial Meeting as an in-person meeting from September 12-15, 2021 in St. Louis, Missouri at the [Hyatt Regency St. Louis at the Arch](#). All recommended COVID-19 protocols will be followed. The meeting program and format of the poster sessions are being adjusted to accommodate the changes required to safeguard the health of all attendees. At the same time, we ensure a dynamic and enjoyable meeting experience that will still include the great science, networking, mentoring, and career development activities typical of ASMB's biennial meetings. For those who are unable to travel to St. Louis, a significant portion of the meeting will be made available virtually in real-time (as well as in recorded format) at a reduced registration rate.

The overall theme of the meeting remains "Matrix, Cells, and Interactions in Health, Disease, Aging, and Regeneration". The Keynote Speaker will be Dr. Kenneth Yamada of the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research at NIH. In addition to Plenary, Award, and Concurrent Sessions, there will also be trainee-led Special Interest Sessions, Guest Society Symposia, and a new Iozzo Trainee Award competition for students and postdocs. Travel Awards targeted to trainees and under-represented minorities will be available. Please contact Meeting Chair Jeff Miner ([jeffminer@wustl.edu](mailto:jeffminer@wustl.edu)) or ASMB Executive Director Kendra LaDuca ([kladuca@asmb.net](mailto:kladuca@asmb.net)) for further information. [Registration](#) and abstract submission open April 15.

---

# One Year of e-Symposia

## ASMB E-symposia or: How We Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Pandemic

By Joan Chang, Kendra LaDuca, Ryan Petrie, and Davy Vanhoutte

Where were you when you first realized that 2020 was going to be a little bit different than the year before? When toilet paper became quite hard to find and the strangeness of the matrix began to peak out at you from behind the fabric of your life? For us, it was March 27th, 2020. We were two weeks in to the shutdown in the United States and it was clear that normal was not waiting just around the corner. We were realizing that we had entered a dark tunnel and did not know how long it was or even how fast we were moving! Fortunately, what was clear in those opening days of the pandemic was that we were all going to become experts (or attempt to!) in Videotelephony. A technology straight of classic science fiction that had become available on every device but was underused for group meetings. On March 27th, 2020 when the ASMB Communications and Outreach Committee (Chair: Alexandra Naba, Members: Jay Bhave, Joan Chang, Javier Bravo-Cordero, Aastha Kapoor, Ryan Petrie, Davy Vanhoutte, and Justin Weinbaum) met on Zoom to talk about how to grow our Twitter audience and promote the biennial meeting, all the essential ingredients to create an E-symposium series were in place. When the suggestion was made that we take advantage of the ubiquity of Zoom to connect matrix scientists around the world at a time when even traveling to the grocery store was difficult, it was unanimously approved. Thus, the idea of organizing an ASMB E-symposium series was planted. By the end of the March 27th meeting, we had a team (Fig. 1) eager to work together to overcome the isolation imposed by the global pandemic by promoting the communication of the latest discoveries in matrix biology from around the world. Figure 1.

And so, it started, a virtual journey into the world of matrix. We sent out a call for abstracts and received an enthusiastic response. A program was put together, registrations set up, and we decided to put the, then relatively unknown, Zoom webinar platform to the test and rise above the restrictions of time, space and that little thing called 'a pandemic'. On April 23rd we all logged on as panelists and "Entered the Matrix" not knowing exactly what we were going to find in this strange new virtual reality. What we found was a global community of matrix scientists eager to connect! The talks were uniformly excellent and the participation from the audience was energizing. People joined us from around the world, from the Sweden to Australia and many places in between, despite the humongous time difference! There were a few technical issues, but we were able to solve them together as the seconds counted down to the first presentation. That same day we organized a debriefing and all four of us were floating on air, with the world around us moving in slow-motion (fortunately without the gunplay and destruction that figured so prominently in our favorite 1999 action movie) and we could not stop smiling. The happiness was from the realization that we had worked together and launched a platform that gave a voice to matrix scientists all over the world and connected them despite the nearly global lockdown due to the pandemic. Thus, we clearly had no other choice than to develop a sequel to our effort, "The Matrix Reloaded", and, with support of our members and the ASMB executive committee, the ASMB E-Symposium series was officially born. We wanted to keep things as consistent as possible for our audience, so we made the decision to keep with Thursdays from 11am to 12:30 pm EST (with apologies to our Aussie and Kiwi friends! But hey, did you know you can request for recordings of the meetings as ASMB members?). And with each E-symposium, we continued to iron out the tiny creases, honed our online chairing skills, and enjoyed every single scientific talk and discussion. We also learnt the value of backup chairs, in case of sudden internet mishaps, and the importance of being able to text someone else on the call, in case of emergency, or even just to ask the speaker a question. Come to think of it, that's a feature Zoom can improve on, allowing panelists to ask a question! For those of us on the E-symposium dream team (see Fig. 1) who were locked down at home, being part of the organization of this series helped us step out of the uncertainty of the pandemic and hear how covid was impacting the world beyond our four walls. Additionally, even though we couldn't do experiments, we felt our effort were helping our scientific community in other meaningful ways. This experience has reinforced the sense of belonging to something that is bigger than the individual. Essentially, organizing the E-symposium series allows us to further contribute to our beloved Matrix Society and the field of matrix biology PLUS it's a way to give the pandemic the "middle finger" and not let it impose limitations on the communication of the most recent discoveries in matrix biology. Davy "Morpheus" Vanhoutte really speaks for all of us when he says: "It allowed me to gain additional experience in organizing a mini-meeting, including sending calls for abstracts, selecting abstracts, assembling a scientific program, chairing sessions and moderating Q&A, all despite the inability to meet in person or even travel across state lines." The time that we worked on the E-symposia allowed us to pretend that things were 'normal' for a short amount of time, even though we are still not quite sure what 'normal' will mean in the coming year(s). By the time we were organizing our third ASMB E-

symposium “Matrix: Master puppeteer”, we understood that we had found a way to exploit this new era in videotelephony to give a voice to trainees, new and established investigators -with our eye on diversity and inclusivity- from all over the matrix world. Looking back at the report Zoom generates after each symposium, we notice that we had Matrix scientists and enthusiasts joining us from all over the world, including Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, Sweden, Norway, Brazil, Australia, Japan, Ireland, France, Denmark, Mexico, UK, Greece, Austria, South Korea, Poland, South Africa, Germany and Spain, to name a few. Equally important, we quickly realized that this was the perfect opportunity to launch a call for guest chairs and give ASMB members at any career stage (including graduate student and post-docs) the chance to gain experience in proposing and organizing their own scientific session on an international scale. At that point we were also lucky that the journals Matrix biology and Matrix Biology Plus were so kind to sponsor the overhead costs associated with these symposia, which allowed ASMB to keep these sessions free and open to all! There is no doubt that we envision a great future in for these E-symposia in the years to come. And believe that with the proper promotion on our ASMB twitter feed, these E-symposia have created a path to further enhance the visibility of the ASMB and its membership on a global scale (if you look at how international the attendees are). If our resounding tale of virtual adventure and camaraderie has resonated with you, Kendra “The Oracle” LaDuca would love to hear from you! We encourage you to seek out ways to volunteer with the ASMB. Also, as we write this, the news has just broke that the ASMB biennial meeting will take place in-person with a virtual component this September 12-15 in St. Louis, MO. We encourage all of you to attend, if you can safely do so, otherwise we hope the lessons learned from the E-symposium series will enable people to experience the excitement of the meeting despite socially distancing from home. Stay safe, get vaccinated when you can, and we will all look forward to being together again soon, whether in this world or in the MATRIX.



*The E-symposium Dream Team (clockwise from top left): Kendra “The Oracle” LaDuca, Ryan “Blue Pill” Petrie, Joan “Neo” Chang, and Davy “Morpheus” Vanhoutte. United in the common purpose of reducing academic isolation and the feeling that 1999 was 10 years ago.*

E-Symposium	Date	Participants
Enter the Matrix	April 2020	256
The ECM Reloaded	May 2020	338
Matrix: Master Puppeteer	August 2020	207
Tribute to Zena Werb	September 2020	275
Matrix in the CNS Chair: Dr. Yao Yao (U. Georgia)	October 2020	135
Iozzo Trainee Awards	November 2020	83
Matrix Remodeling in Metabolic Disease Chair: Dr. Evangelia Bellas (Temple)	December 2020	167
Fibroblast Phenotype Changes in Disease Chair: Dr. Morgan Salmon (U. Michigan)	February 2021	150
Matrix Math: Computational Modeling of the ECM Chair: Dr. William Richardson (Clemson U.)	March 2021	162
Growth Factor Regulation by the Matrix Chair: Dr. Dirk Hubmacher (Mt. Sinai)	April 2021	TBD
Stroma Progenitor Cells and Tissue Repair Chair: Dr. Andrew Leask (U. Saskatchewan)	June 2021	TBD
		<b>Total = 1,773</b>

**Table 1:** What we found when we entered the matrix, or as we call it, “The Red Pill Table”

---

## ASMB Discount on New Books from Springer

Did you know ASMB members get a discount on Springer's Biology of Extracellular Matrix book series? ASMB members receive a **40% discount** on all books published in the series. It's a great offer! [Check out the details here.](#)

---

## June e-Symposium

**June 10, 2021, 11:00am US Eastern**

*The contribution of stroma progenitor cells to tissue repair and regeneration*

Co-sponsored by the Canadian Skin Research Group and chaired by: Andrew Leask, *University of Saskatchewan*, join us for these exciting talks:

**Stimulating wound healing in skin using biological dressings engineered from adipose-derived stromal cells (ASCs)**, Julie Fradette, Université Laval/ LOEX; and

**Fibroblast heterogeneity underlying tissue regeneration and fibrosis**, Jeff Biernaskie, University of Calgary

[Register now!](#)

---

## Announcements

### Biennial Meeting Timeline

- April 15 - Meeting Registration and Abstract Submission Opens!
- July 16 - Abstract Submission Deadline
- August 20 - Last Day for Hotel Reservations

### Membership Renewal

It is not too late! You can still renew your membership. Renewing your membership is critical to the financial well-being of the society during this difficult time. Every membership dollar goes toward the mission of the society. Keep in mind, ASMB Members get discounts on the Biennial Meeting registration and abstract submission. Now is the perfect time to make sure your membership is up to date!

---

**Stay Safe and Be Well**



---

[Twitter](#) [Website](#) [Calendar](#)