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[Member since 2006]**

Q. Briefly tell us about your education and career background.

A. I have always had a great passion for studying natural sciences and chemistry. In elementary school I heard for the first time about the radioactive isotopes. My childhood dream was to work at NASA and to study rocks brought from other planets. As a joke, after I got married, my husband wrote on the kitchen door “Space Research Center – Caution Radiation Area – Authorized Personnel Only”.



Dr. Stanciu in the Carpathian Mountains of Romania

I graduated from the Faculty of Chemistry at the University of Bucharest with an MS and a PhD in radiobiochemistry. After graduation, I worked at the Nuclear Medicine Laboratory of Bucharest Institute of Oncology and at the Faculty of Chemistry (University of Bucharest), in the Department of Physical-Chemistry and Applied Radiochemistry.

Q. What made you decide on a career in laboratory medicine?

A. At Bucharest Institute of Oncology I discovered the beauty and the complexity of laboratory medicine and at Faculty of Chemistry, the real basic research. In this way I had a great opportunity: to combine biochemical research with clinical chemistry.

Q, What areas of laboratory medicine do you specialize in and what initiated your interest in those areas?

A. I specialize in biochemistry, immunology and radioimmunology. I think that the acquisition of knowledge is a continuous process, because it is very important for us to continue to learn and integrate specialty knowledge into our general knowledge base. What we consider specialized knowledge today becomes, at some point in the future, part of the general knowledge of laboratory medicine. I believe that genomics research will have a major effect on the development of breakthrough medications. We are at the beginning of the gene therapy era. I am interested in the relationship between research, the lab diagnosis and therapy.

My research interests encompass the characterization of the extracellular matrix remodeling in tumor progression and in some heart diseases, like chronic heart failure and atrial fibrillation. Chronic heart failure and atrial fibrillation are characterized by systemic inflammation. I study the impact of some modern therapy on inflammation and cardiac remodeling. Hallmarks of cancer-associated inflammation include the presence of polypeptide messengers of inflammation (cytokines and chemokines) and the occurrence of tissue remodeling and angiogenesis. Two fields are converging to impact cancer: one has identified novel substrates of metalloproteinases that alter immune cell function and the other has revealed a role for inflammation in human cancers.

Q. What are some of the most rewarding and/or challenging moments of your career?

A. I will never forget the day when I received a large white envelope with NACB logo. Inside it was a diploma; I had won one of the 2010 NACB Distinguished Abstract Awards with the poster ***Anti-inflammatory and anti-remodeling effects of Cardiac Resynchronization Therapy***. I was invited to the NACB awards luncheon and I had the pleasure of being in the same room with the 120 Fellows of NACB. It was incredible! This award gave me confidence in myself and in my work. After that, one year later, I again won one of the 2011 NACB Distinguished Abstract Awards, this time with the poster ***Recurrence Assessment in Papillary Thyroid Carcinoma associated with Autoimmune Thyroid Diseases, after Thyroidectomy and before Radioiodine Therapy***". The surprise was greater than the first time. Even now, I can not believe it! Moreover, in 2011, I was awarded with an International Travel Grant to attend AACC's Annual Meeting in Atlanta, supported by a gift from AACC's Past Presidents. In Atlanta, due to those persons who generously supported my travel award, I had the opportunity to visit Emory University Hospital and Quest Diagnostics. It was the first time that I saw medical and research laboratories abroad. The medical lab tours were an important experience for my professional career.

Q. What do you see as the challenges facing laboratory medicine in your country?

A. I think one challenge of laboratory medicine in Romania is quality assurance. Actually, quality control is a priority in any medical laboratory. Harmonization with international standardization is an important topic for laboratory medicine in Romania. We are on the right path because the great majority of clinical labs are certified EN ISO 15189 and participate in national and international programs of quality control. Unfortunately, there are still problems in rural areas. Our concern is to have well-trained laboratory specialists throughout the country. To this purpose, my colleagues from the Association for Quality in Laboratories (CALILAB) have organized many postgraduate courses on management and quality assurance in medical laboratories.

Q. Other than AACC, with what other professional organizations are you involved?

A. Currently, I am involved in the Romanian Professional Association of the Biochemists, Biologists and Chemists from Medical Laboratories (OBBCSSR), a member in the National Council, Scientific Committee, and Vice President of OBBCSSR Bucharest branch. In 2011, I was accepted in the "Cellular biology of the Heart" working group from European Society of Cardiology (ESC).

Also, I am member of the Romanian Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (RSBMB), a member of the Federation of European Biochemical Societies (FEBS), and of the European Committee for External Quality Assurance Programmes in Laboratory Medicine (EQALM)

Q. What advice do have for anyone wanting to get involved in AACC?

The Gallwas Grant is a great opportunity for people from developing countries to get an AACC membership. This membership gave me the opportunity to have full access to information in the field of clinical chemistry, through original and electronic copies of the *Clinical Chemistry* journal, books, weekly news updates by e-mail and AACC website. My advice isapply for an AACC membership with confidence!

Q. Finally, and on a lighter note, what would recommend that a visitor to Romania do or see, and why?

A. Why should you go to Romania? The straight answer is because it is one of the most beautiful countries of Southeast Europe. Romania still claims regions that seem bastions of a medieval past long since lost elsewhere. The main attractions are the Carpathian Mountains, Transylvania, the Danube delta, Black Sea resorts, medieval towns, painted monasteries and traditional villages.

Romania is known worldwide for its fairy tale land: Transylvania. Some say that Transylvania sits on one of Earth's strongest magnetic fields and its people have extra-sensory perception. The area is also home to Bram Stoker's Dracula, and it's easy to get caught up in the tale while driving along winding roads through dense, dark, ancient forests and over mountain passes. Count Dracula, a fictional character of the novel, was inspired by one of the best-known figures of Romanian history, Vlad Dracula, nicknamed Vlad Tepes (*Vlad the Impaler*), who was the ruler of Walachia at various times from 1456-1462. In Sighisoara you can visit the house in which Vlad was born (now hosting a very nice restaurant and a small museum of medieval weapons). Other Dracula sites include: the Old Princely Court in Bucharest, Snagov Monastery, where, according to legend, Vlad's remains were buried; the ruins of the Poenari Fortress (considered to be the authentic Dracula's Castle); the village of Arefu where Dracula legends are still told, the wonderful city of Brasov where Vlad led raids against the Saxon merchants, Dracula Castle Hotel located in beautiful Tihuta Pass and, of course, Bran Castle.

Another wonderful place is the Danube delta. Recognized as the world's third most biologically diverse area – after Australia's Great Coral Reef and Ecuador's Galapagos Archipelago – the Danube Delta has been recognized by UNESCO for its outstanding universal value. The biggest tourist attraction in Bucharest (Romania's capital) is the Parliament Palace or the House of the People. The Palace was designed and nearly completed by the Ceausescu regime as the seat of political and administrative power. According to the World Records Academy, the Palace is the world's largest building after the Pentagon. I visited the building once, when they opened it for public in 1990 and the rooms are the biggest I've ever seen in my life. The building is now used as the parliament house as well as for conferences and exhibitions and can be visited by guided tours.