

15th International Junior Academy Summer School

July 3-5, 2025

Bordeaux, France

FINAL REPORT

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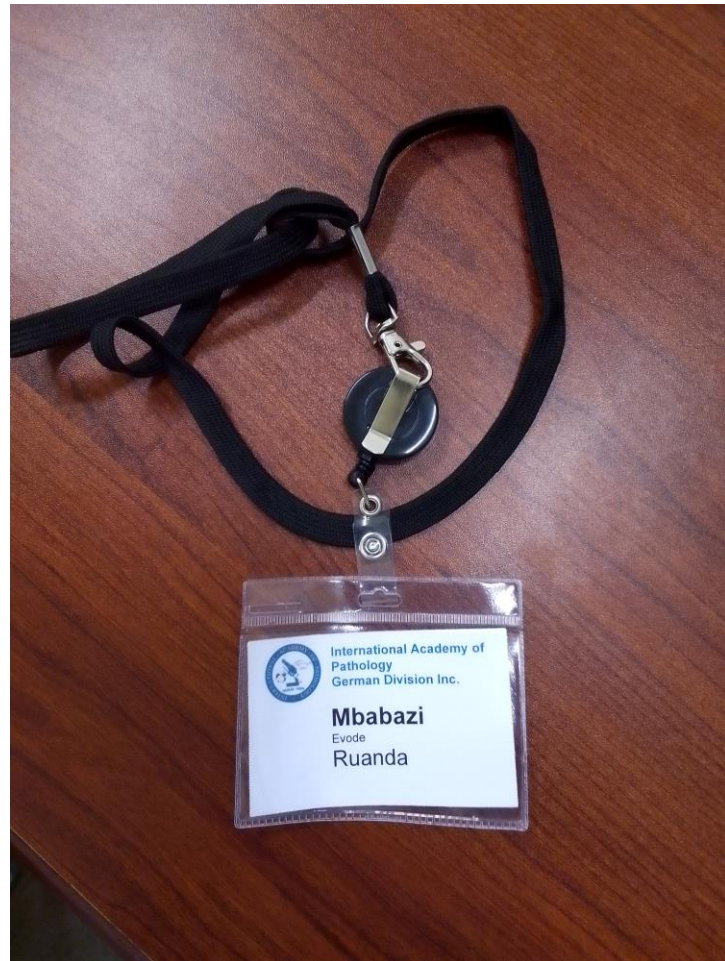


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 15th International Junior Academy Summer School served as an exceptional platform for young pathologists and trainees from around the world to deepen their knowledge, present original research, and build professional networks. The conference featured expert presentations on diverse pathology topics, including lymphoma diagnostics, gynecological mesenchymal tumors, lung nodule screening, breast lesion classification, and advances in digital pathology and laboratory automation.

I had the honor of presenting my research on the prevalence of Human Papillomavirus and its genotype correlation with cervical lesions, which was well-received and enriched through constructive feedback from international experts. In addition to the academic sessions, the conference fostered meaningful socio-cultural exchanges, providing a valuable opportunity to connect with peers across different cultures and healthcare systems.

The experience underscored the critical need for adopting advanced diagnostic technologies and digital pathology infrastructure in resource-limited settings like mine. It also reinforced the importance of ongoing professional development and international collaboration to elevate pathology practice, training, and research globally.

Overall, the conference was a transformative experience that will significantly contribute to my career development and efforts to improve pathology services in my home country.

I. INTRODUCTION

The International Junior Academy is an annual summer school that serves as a platform for sharing knowledge and best practices among young pathologists, pathologists-in-training, and senior pathologists/academicians worldwide. The conference brings together participants from diverse backgrounds and settings, allowing them to exchange insights on selected pathology topics and learn how practices vary across different countries. Professional mentorship is another key feature of the conference.

Expert pathologists present on selected topics, while the rest of the participants are encouraged to contribute in various ways, including asking questions, giving comments, and sharing how practices are implemented in their own settings.

More importantly, the International Junior Academy Summer School provides a unique platform for young researchers to present their case reports and/or research papers orally, an opportunity rarely offered by other conferences.

Additionally, attendees have the chance to explore the beauty of the host country and city, as well as engage in socio-cultural exchanges, as they come from diverse countries with different cultural backgrounds. This year's summer school was organized by the German and French divisions of the IAP.

I applied for the conference because I found it fascinating and believed it could be a life-changing opportunity for me, my career, and my country as a whole. I applied to attend the conference under the financial sponsorship of the Vladimir Totović Foundation and was fortunate to be selected and sponsored. The day I received an email from Hannah Hexamer notifying me that my travel grant application had been approved, I was overwhelmed with joy. I knelt down to praise the Lord while also expressing my gratitude to the Vladimir Totović Foundation. I was not only excited about attending the summer school but also about visiting Europe, as it was my first time traveling there.

The next day, many questions crossed my mind: Would I be able to secure a French Schengen visa? Would I manage the travel costs, as the grant from the foundation was to be reimbursed after the conference? However, my strong objectives and the overall benefits of attending the conference outweighed these challenges, and I decided to work tirelessly toward realizing my dream of participating in an international pathology conference. Fortunately, I obtained the visa, fulfilled all the requirements, and traveled safely to the conference.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To acquire advanced knowledge in pathology through direct learning from expert pathologists working in developed countries.
2. To establish a strong professional network with pathologists and trainees from diverse regions worldwide.
3. To learn and adopt best practices in pathology laboratory operations as implemented in advanced healthcare systems.
4. To share my passion for cytopathology and highlight its potential in enabling affordable early cancer diagnosis in my home country.
5. To present my research paper through an oral presentation and gain constructive feedback from international peers and experts.
6. To explore the cultural and historical heritage of Bordeaux and France as a whole.
7. To engage in socio-cultural exchanges with fellow attendees, fostering long-term global professional and cultural connections.

III. CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

The conference was exceptionally well-organized, exceeding my expectations. I was particularly impressed by the punctuality and precision with which the program followed the exact chronological flow outlined in the schedule published two months earlier, without a single delay. My sincere appreciation goes to the organizers, especially the German and French divisions of the IAP, for their outstanding coordination.

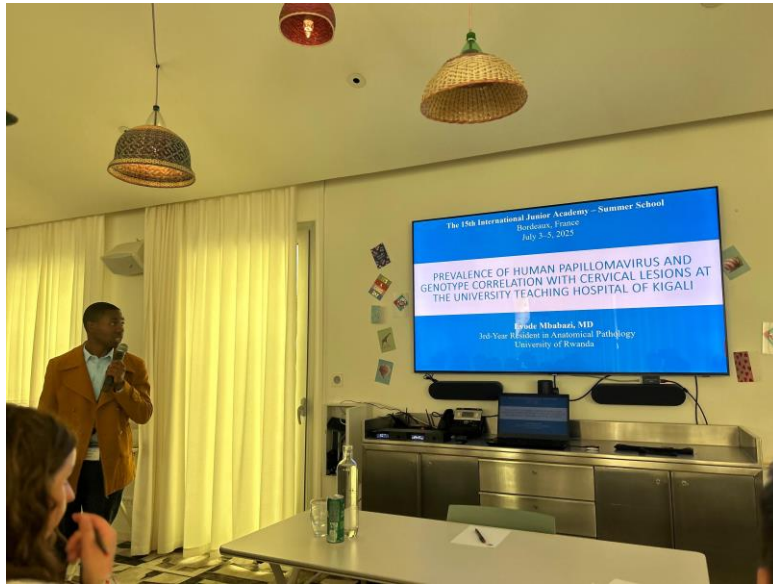
The conference was held in person, and I arrived in Bordeaux a day before the start date to avoid missing any sessions due to the long journey. I stayed at the Central Hostel Bordeaux Centre, located a few miles from the main conference venue, Mama Shelter Hotel. The venue itself was remarkable, featuring clean, well-ventilated single rooms and excellent cuisine, which made the experience even more memorable.

The program included renowned keynote speakers who covered a broad range of pathology topics, from hematopathology to genitourinary pathology. The organizers ensured a comprehensive agenda that addressed both foundational and cutting-edge areas of the field. Below is a summary of the key sessions I attended:

1. **New Strategies to Understand Lymphomas** – *Prof. Dr. Martin-Leo Hansmann, Professor Emeritus, Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany.*
This session highlighted innovative techniques in immunofluorescence double staining for lymphomas, a technology I had not encountered before. It broadened my perspective on lymphoma diagnostics, even though immunofluorescence is not yet available in my current setting.

2. **How to Survive the Jungle of Gynecological Mesenchymal Neoplasms: A Practical Diagnostic Guide** – *Dr. Sabrina Croce, Biopathology Department, Institut Bergonié, Bordeaux, France.* This session focused on best practices for diagnosing uterine mesenchymal neoplasms, including smooth muscle tumors, endometrial stromal tumors, and adenosarcoma. The presentation also emphasized the role of molecular testing, which remains a challenge in Rwanda due to resource limitations.
3. **Lung Nodules: Preparing for Screening Programs** – *Prof. Sabina Berezowska, Institut Universitaire de Pathologie, Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Vaudois, Lausanne, Switzerland.* This informative and engaging session provided insights into approaching pulmonary biopsies and structuring diagnoses. In my setting, pulmonary pathology is rare due to the limited number of pulmonologists and the absence of a dedicated pulmonary pathologist, making this session particularly valuable.
4. **B3 Lesions of the Breast** – *Dr. Gaetan MacGrogan, Biopathology Department, Institut Bergonié, Bordeaux, France.* The session covered the complexities of diagnosing B-classification breast lesions, including overlapping entities such as atypical ductal hyperplasia and low-grade DCIS. It was insightful to compare these practices with current diagnostic approaches in my home country.
5. **Differential Diagnosis of Colitis** – *Prof. Rupert Langer, University of Linz, Austria.* This session offered practical guidance on one of the most challenging aspects of pathology: differentiating benign intestinal and colonic biopsies. It provided valuable diagnostic clues applicable to everyday practice.
6. **Handling Urological Cancer Specimens** – *Dr. Ashish Chandra, Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, UK.* This session was especially useful for trainees, offering detailed grossing techniques for kidney, prostate, bladder, and testicular specimens.
7. **Laboratory Automation and Digital Pathology** – *Prof. Philipp Ströbel, Institute of Pathology, University Medical Center Göttingen, Germany; President, IAP German Division.* Prof. Ströbel presented a decade-long journey of transitioning to a fully automated and digital pathology laboratory. The presentation was both inspiring and eye-opening, highlighting the efficiency of digital pathology and underscoring the gap between manual practices in my setting and the advanced systems in developed countries. While our current whole-slide scanner (at University Teaching Hospital of Kigali) has significant limitations, this session reinforced the importance of investing in digital pathology to address workforce shortages and improve diagnostic efficiency.

IV. ABSTRACT PRESENTATION



One of the most exciting moments was the oral presentation of my research paper. I was privileged to be among the 17 presenters selected this year. I presented my research titled “*Prevalence of Human Papillomavirus and Genotype Correlation with Cervical Lesions at the University Teaching Hospital of Kigali.*”

The study aimed to evaluate the prevalence of HPV in our setting, identify the most common genotypes, and assess their association with cervical lesions. The paper has been published in *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* (DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4269/ajtmh.24-0760>).

I also had the opportunity to learn from my fellow presenters and their insightful case reports. My sincere thanks to the organizers for providing us with this tremendous platform to share knowledge and learn from each other.

V. NETWORKING AND SOCIO-CULTURAL EXCHANGE

One of the most crucial and enriching aspects of the International Junior Academy Summer School was the opportunity to network with pathologists and trainees from around the world. We exchanged insights on how residency programs are structured in different countries, discussed various approaches to pathology practice, and shared best practices that could be adapted to our own settings.

Equally remarkable was the socio-cultural exchange. It was truly inspiring to see people from diverse cultural backgrounds sitting together, sharing thoughts, food, and drinks, and engaging openly without barriers imposed by cultural norms or beliefs.



Here I am standing with **Prof. Philipp Ströbel** from the Institute of Pathology, University Medical Center Göttingen, Germany, and President of the IAP German Division.



Sharing food and drinks with other participants at Mama Shelter Hotel in Bordeaux, France.

VI. EXPLORING THE BEAUTY OF BORDEAUX

As part of the conference, we had the opportunity to explore the wonders of Bordeaux. On July 3, we participated in a guided walking city tour and visited some of the most historical and prestigious sites, including Saint-André Cathedral, Place de la Bourse, and the Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux.

We also visited Château Carbonnieux, one of Bordeaux's leading vineyards renowned for its fine wines.



VII. KEY TAKEAWAYS AND INSIGHTS

1. **Advancement in Diagnostic Techniques:** Learned cutting-edge approaches such as molecular testing in gynecological mesenchymal neoplasms, B-classifications of breast lesions, grossing techniques, pulmonary and highlighting the importance of digitalizing pathology laboratory among others.
2. **Value of Networking and Collaboration:** Built professional connections with pathologists and trainees worldwide, exchanging knowledge on residency structures, laboratory practices, and potential areas of collaboration to strengthen pathology training in resource-limited settings.
3. **Bridging the Gap Between Resource Settings:** Gained insights into digital pathology and laboratory automation, reinforcing the need to advocate for sustainable technological investments to address workforce shortages and enhance diagnostic efficiency in my home country.
4. **Professional Growth Through Research Presentation:** Presented my research on HPV prevalence and cervical lesions, receiving valuable feedback from international peers and experts, which will help refine future studies and strengthen scientific communication skills.
5. **Cultural Exchange and Broader Perspective:** Experienced rich socio-cultural interactions and explored Bordeaux's historical landmarks, deepening appreciation for cultural diversity and the role of international collaboration in advancing pathology globally.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Live Streaming of the Conference:** Future editions of the International Junior Academy Summer School should include live streaming to allow broader participation and reach those unable to attend in person.
2. **Extended Time for Abstract Presentations:** If the program schedule allows, the time allocated for abstract presentations should be increased to at least 10 minutes per presenter to facilitate deeper discussion and feedback.
3. **Post-Conference Networking Platform:** Establish a structured post-conference network to connect junior pathologists, trainees, senior experts, and mentors, ensuring ongoing collaboration and mentorship beyond the event.
4. **Introduction of Cultural Nights:** Incorporate cultural nights into the program to allow attendees from different countries to showcase and share unique aspects of their culture, fostering deeper cultural understanding and exchange.

IX. CONCLUSION

Attending the 15th International Junior Academy Summer School was a transformative professional and personal experience. The conference not only enhanced my knowledge of advanced pathology practices but also provided a platform to present my research, gain constructive feedback, and connect with experts and peers from across the globe.

The exposure to innovative diagnostic techniques and laboratory automation underscored the importance of bridging technological gaps in resource-limited settings like mine. Equally, the opportunity to engage in cultural exchange and explore Bordeaux enriched the experience, fostering both professional growth and global understanding.

This experience has strengthened my commitment to advancing pathology practice in my home country and leveraging the insights gained to improve diagnostic services and training for future pathologists.



😊 I am deeply grateful to the Vladimir Totović Foundation and the German and French divisions of the IAP for granting me this life-changing opportunity!