

# Meet a New ASP Member

Our featured new ASP member, Dr. Michael Spiteller, is Head of the Institute of Environmental Research (INFU) at the Technical University of Dortmund, Dortmund, Germany. Dr. Spiteller was also the recipient, together with co-authors, of the 2014 Schwarting Award for the paper entitled, "Endophytes are hidden producers of maytansine in *Putterlickia* roots" in *J. Nat. Prod.* **2014**, *77*, 2577-2584. We are grateful to Dr. Spiteller for sharing his enthusiasm for both endophytic fungi and cars with us, and we welcome him to the ASP.

By Dr. Dan Kulakowski

## How did you hear about the ASP?

Quite a while ago, I searched for *Journal of Natural Products* on the internet and just by chance discovered ASP.

## Why did you join ASP?

I joined ASP because it is an international-oriented society which covers a broad spectrum of different disciplines. It also has Annual Meetings at different places all over the world. The membership increases the chance for potential collaboration and exchange of ideas. Furthermore, it is always exciting to meet people known only from the literature.

## Do you belong to any other scientific societies?

I have been a member of the German Chemical Society (GDCh) for over 30 years.

## What are your current research interests in pharmacognosy?

With my background in analytical chemistry, I am always interested in applying the latest technology available. Currently, we are looking at plant-endophyte interactions at the cellular level using matrix assisted laser desorption/ionization (MALDI) imaging mass spectrometry, in addition to the comparison of endophytic/plant gene expression to understand the communication between plants and associated organisms. What are the signaling molecules? What are the mechanisms to turn them on and off? What are the organismal triggers and modulators and how do they benefit from each other?

## What is your scientific background?

I studied chemistry at the University of Göttingen, Göttingen, Germany, and earned my PhD in analytical chemistry and mass spectrometry. At that time, I studied urine samples from patients with inherited diseases, but I was also interested in naturally-occurring substances in urine and their possible origin. Later, I changed to the department of soil science, did some work on soil humus nitrogen, and had the opportunity to visit Dr. Morris Schnitzer of Agriculture Canada in Ottawa, Canada, one of the leading scientists in this field. I earned my Habilitation with



Dr. Spiteller in the field.

DR. DENNIS ECKELMANN

venia legendi in soil science at the Faculty of Forest Science and was later appointed as group leader at Bayer Inc. There, I was in charge of metabolism studies of newly developed pesticides and their registration. After seven years in industry I returned to academia and, for the last 16 years, have been at the Technical University of Dortmund where I have served as head of the Institute of Environmental Research (INFU) in the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology. The current focus is natural product chemistry, structure elucidation of plant constituents from different African countries and plant-microorganism interaction.

## What would you like to achieve through your membership?

I think that the ASP is an ideal platform for getting in touch with scientists all over the world and for meeting them at the Annual Meetings. It would be nice to find some new friends with common interests.

## What do you like doing in your spare time?

In my spare time, I go skiing and hiking with my son. I also enjoy visiting some friends and having a good time with a glass of wine.

## What are you currently reading?

I am currently reading a book on vintage Mercedes cars, many of them produced pre- or post- World War II. As a small boy, I used to live above a car workshop and could see all these cars, and most of them are not available any more. In addition, I just started to read Mr. John Strelecky's *The Why Are You Here Café*, and it is amazing what we can learn from a sea turtle.

## What is your favorite organism (to study or for general interest)?

My favorite organism is the first endophytic fungus we discovered that produces the highly-active anticancer compound camptothecin. This organism was isolated from the Indian tree *Nothapodytes foetida* (formerly *Mappia foetida*, Icacinaceae). This endophyte belongs to the genus *Entrophospora*. It is remarkable to discover that an endophytic fungus is able to produce a host plant compound such as camptothecin. ■

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