

## Preface: selected papers from SESEH 2012 Sino-European Symposium on Environment and Health

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With an aim of promoting collaborations with China, the 2012 Sino-European Symposium on Environment and Health (SESEH 2012) was successfully held at National University of Ireland, Galway, from 20 to 25 August 2012.

The SESEH 2012 provided an internationally leading platform for interaction between scientists, consultants, and public servants engaged in the multidisciplinary areas of environment and health. With the fast economic growth, the importance of environment and health is widely recognised in China

and China welcomes international experts for collaboration. The symposium series aims to provide an opportunity for a direct communication between experts from China and the rest of the world, and helps to foster and develop international collaborations with China, the second largest economy of the world. The first of this new conference series attracted a total number of 212 participants from 28 countries, including 53 students. There were 119 oral presentations (students 29) and 73 posters (students 16).

The theme of environment and health is one of the most challenging issues that human beings are currently facing. With the economic development and improvement of our quality of life, the environment around us is under pressure and often deteriorating. This has raised many questions that require answers: Is the air we breathe still fresh? Is the water we drink still clean? Is the food we eat still safe? This conference brings together international experts in Galway to discuss these questions. The themes cover a wide range of topics including advanced medical mineralogy, air quality, bioavailability and bioaccessibility, clays, coal and health, cryptosporidium, environmental health, environmental health in buildings, environmental management, environmental sensors, GIS and quantitative methods, land use and soil environment, microbiology, pharmaceuticals, POPs and pesticides, sediment pollution, soil remediation, soil threats, smart wastewater treatment, and water quality.

There were a total of 6 internationally leading experts serving as keynote speakers of SESEH 2012:

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Professor Ming-Hung Wong, Professor Shu Tao, Professor Xiaoying Zheng, Professor Derek Clements-Croome, Professor Jerome Nriagu, and Professor William Manning. In addition, the world-renowned Medical Geology Short Course was successfully held as a pre-conference workshop of SESEH 2012, led by Dr. Jose Centeno, Dr. Olle Selinus, Dr. Bob Finkelman, and Dr. Maurice Mulcahy.

To complement the academic programme of the conference, two conference fieldtrips have been organised to the Burren and Cliffs of Moher, and Connemara and Kylemore Abbey. Galway is a popular tourist destination, attracting more than 1 million international visitors annually. SESEH 2012 delegates and their accompanying persons have undoubtedly made significant contribution to the local economy. Galway has provided SESEH 2012 delegates a good experience with its well-preserved Irish tradition, hospitality, and natural beauty.

The SESEH 2012 conference is co-organised by GIS Centre, Ryan Institute of NUI, Galway (<http://www.ryaninstitute.ie/facilities/gis-centre>), The Geographical Society of China ([www.gsc.org.cn](http://www.gsc.org.cn)) and Environmental Sciences Association of Ireland (ISAI, [www.esaiweb.org](http://www.esaiweb.org)), supported by Ryan Institute of

NUI, Galway ([www.ryaninstitute.ie](http://www.ryaninstitute.ie)), Society for Environmental Geochemistry and Health (SEGH, [www.segh.net](http://www.segh.net)), International Medical Geology Association (IMGA, [www.medicalgeology.org](http://www.medicalgeology.org)), Geographical Society of Ireland ([www.ucd.ie/gsi](http://www.ucd.ie/gsi)), Ireland Chinese Association of Environment, Resources & Energy (ICAERE, [www.icaere.ie](http://www.icaere.ie)), National Centre for Geocomputation (ncg.nuim.ie), South China Institute of Environmental Sciences (<http://www.scies.org/en>), and Chinese Environmental Scholars and Professionals Network (<http://www.cespn.net/english>).

From a total of 192 oral and poster presentations, we have chosen 13 papers for publication in this special issue of *Environmental Geochemistry and Health*. The topics demonstrate the wide range of themes and up-to-date developments in areas relating to environment and health, including bioavailability and bioaccessibility of chemicals, POPs in the environment and their risk assessment, environmental techniques, water quality, pharmaceuticals, and food quality.

We are grateful to all participants of SESEH 2012 for their contributions. As guest editors, we would like to thank the Editor-in-Chief of EGAH, Prof. Ming H. Wong, and the publisher, Ms Betty van Herk, for their support for the publication of this special issue.