ParadOx Symposium - The Oxygen Paradox and the French Paradox in Aging and Disease was held from October 13 to 16 at the Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Angeles, co-organized by the hospital, the School of Gerontology at the University of Southern California (USC), the Universities of Paris and Rennes, and the Office for Science and Technology.

Despite being essential for life on Earth, Oxygen can actually be extremely harmful to organisms, due to the presence of free radicals and other oxidants that come from normal metabolizing. This phenomenon, termed the “Oxygen Paradox,” lies at the heart of theories explaining aging. The other key term discussed, the “French Paradox,” refers to the paradox between French lifestyle (foods rich in fat, cholesterol, and salt) and the relatively low incidence of cardiovascular disease mortality in France.

Given that these two paradox exist and require a scientific explanation, Professors Kelvin Davies, Vice Dean of the Davis School of Gerontology at USC, and Professor Joanna Davies, Director of the Osteoporosis Center of Los Angeles and partner of the Medical group at the Good Samaritan Hospital, created an initiative to assemble a group of approximately sixty medical specialists from both the United States and France. Together, these experts hoped to obtain a deeper scientific understanding of the contributing clinical and fundamental aspects underlying these phenomena. The arrangement of this event was supported in part by Professor Bertrand Friguet (Pierre and Marie Curie University), Professors Josaine Cillard and Pierre Cillarde (Université de Rennes), Professor Enrique Cadenas (USC) and the Office for Science and Technology, Los Angeles.

Throughout the Symposium, the gathered experts who were predominantly researchers from USC, clinicians from the Good Samaritan Hospital and researchers from the Sorbonne Universités, explored topics ranging from the recent discoveries in the field to the potential promise of emerging therapies. It successfully strengthened the bonds between French and American researchers on the subjects of aging and oxidative stress. The conclusion of such a high-level exchange of ideas is likely to lead to a publication in a highly regarded biomedical journal.

The man who initiated it all, Professor Kelvin Davies, has been a long time partner of the Office for Science and Technology and a staunch Francophile: in 2012 he was named a Knight of the National Order of Merit (Chevalier de l’Ordre National du Mérite) by the Consul General of France in Los Angeles. World leader in the field of oxidative stress, Professor Davies frequently holds scientific conferences in France and regularly interacts with French researchers of the field.