I look back on the ECNP Conference with a pleasure. It went very well and I was glad to meet some of the people I had known only as authors of papers or from correspondence. The conference with such a tradition of high quality brought together many experts interested in the neuroscience and it is always a great chance for the young scientists to learn from them. I am grateful for the ECNP Travel Award and the opportunity of making personal acquaintance and establish connections with neuroscientists from different countries. Being honoured to be an associate member of the ECNP College I took part in the General Assembly of Members and I became more familiar with the ECNP activities and future directions which was very encouraging.

One of the most productive sessions at the conference was the Cannabinoid symposium S.11 with chairing Professors Agren and Manzanares. The organizers were very lucky in choosing speakers, particularly the talk of Professor Mechoulam - Endocannabinoids - intrepid defenders of the nervous system, which provoked a lively discussion. I appreciated very much the symposium (S.04) - The Hot Topics in preclinical neuropsychopharmacology, where also the young scientists had the opportunity to present and discuss their work with distinguished neuroscientists. The talk of Hillebrand (S.04.03) Leptin treatment in activity-based anorexia was very professional. My attention caught also the talk of Hendriks (S.25.04): Matching treatment to patients in heroin assisted treatment of methadone resistant heroin dependent patients. I felt these particular sessions could have some application to development of new therapeautic methods: symposium devoted to neural repair and functional restoration (S.16) and Glutamate preclinical track (S.08). The poster presentations offered participants feedback on their research. It was interesting to listen to a group panel discussion of neuroscientists, pharmacologists, doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, etc.

My main interest is currently aimed on interactions of the immune and nervous systems and their role in depression. As I am engaged in pre-clinical research I closely pay attention to advances made possible through animal research. At the 17th ECNP Congress in Stockholm I presented a poster which summarized our recent research on immune system function in the animal model of depression - olfactory bulbectomy (OB) in rats. Taking into account frequent immune disturbances in depressed patients we examined the effects of valproate on the impaired leukocyte phagocytosis, a parameter of the cell immune function. The results indicate a possibly beneficial role of valproate used as a mood stabilizer in humans. In the control group of animals (without OB) valproate showed an inhibitory effect on leukocyte phagocytosis, which could be of importance in clinics. I was delighted that also clinicians showed interest in our preclinical study.

I would welcome more lectures related to psychoneuroimmunology at the ECNP conference. On the other hand the conference lectures covering a wide neuroscience field made me look at problems within my own research from new angles.

I want to thank organizers for all the effort that they put into making the meeting in Stockholm a success. Many thanks for the excellent conference. I do not doubt that all attendees of the ECNP Conference felt enriched. Though printed books are so much more comfortable than online reading, I appreciated a lot the interactive CD with the abstracts which included also abstracts from another two previous ECNP meetings. With several lectures running simultaneously we all know the wish to split and be present at two symposia at the same time. So everybody must have got considerable academic benefit from the meeting. Anyways I did. I am looking forward to further ECNP conferences.

Jana Pistovcakova
Travel Award P.1.104

It was a great pleasure to participate at ECNP 2004 in Stockholm. First I have to thank the scientific committee to select me for the travel award. The travel award gave me the chance to participate at the congress. I presented a poster with the title “[123I] ADAM: a novel SPECT ligand for quantification of serotonin transporters in humans”. [123I]ADAM is a promising radio-ligand for in vivo quantification of serotonin transporters (SERT) in humans using SPECT. We performed tracer kinetic analysis for midbrain and cerebellum to determine the optimum equilibrium time for SERT quantification and to state at which time point SPECT scans should be taken after application of the tracer. We demonstrated that steady state conditions were reached 210 minutes after the application of the tracer, and were stable for about 2 hours. During the poster session it was a great experience to meet scientists of other countries, and to see and discuss the topics they are working on. Especially I enjoyed meeting people who worked on similar topics as mine, so we could exchange our experiences about the SPECT ligand ADAM. It is great that there is a platform where scientists can come together, present their work and discuss it. I enjoyed the congress very much. Every year at ECNP it is very useful to get updates by lectures of the experts on state of the art treatments of the different psychiatric disorders. I could increase my knowledge about psychopharmacology and this is a great benefit for my daily clinical practice with psychiatric patients. In summary the ECNP 2004 in Stockholm was a great experience where I could update my knowledge about psychopharmacology, meet interesting people from all over the world and last but not least exchange my ideas with scientists of other countries. Thank you ECNP!

Nikolas Klein

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Travel Award P.2.013

The main topic of my poster was our finding of a cognitive deficit in patients with borderline personality disorder and psychotic-like symptoms. These patients showed a decreased performance in an antisaccade task (suppression of fast eye movements). Quite a few people responded enthusiastically and asked questions on methodological issues. My PhD topic is about effects of antipsychotics on cognitive dysfunction, so I had many opportunities to visit interesting lectures, e.g. symposia on atypical antipsychotics. For me, the plenary lectures were most inspiring. I thank the ECNP very much for the travel award!

Koen Grootens
The 17th ECNP Congress was a tremendous scientific experience. Each year it reveals contemporary trends in psychiatry and neurology. Stockholm was the next step on this way. In my opinion clinical psychiatry is in partial crisis today and looks for new possibilities. Topics such like membrane mechanisms of action of psychotropic drugs seem not to give us any further means to make a progress in the treatment of patients. During the Congress more experimental presentations drew my attention than clinical ones. It is worth underlying that experimental studies prevailed among the presentations awarded by Scientific Committee during the Congress. Genes, intracellular messenger systems, neuropeptides, stem cells and deeper understanding of specific role of all known neuromediators appear to be new trends in neuroscience.

My contribution to the Congress was the third part of a study on the role that phospholipase D (PLD) plays in a neuron and a possible role the enzyme may have in mechanism of action of psychotropic drugs. PLD is the next membrane enzyme generating one of second messengers - phosphatidic acid. It has never been explored if it is affected by antidepressants and neuroleptics. Results of my studies in rats indicate that antidepressants with serotonin mechanism of action (paroxetine, amitryptyline) and atypical (olanzapine) but not classical (haloperidol, chlorpromazine, fluphenazine) neuroleptics inhibit membrane PLD. The action is transmitted via 5-HT2A receptors. We claim the finding is a contribution to an understanding of antidepressive mechanism of action of drugs and that olanzapine has a moderate antidepressive action. Agents that act directly on PLD or transcription and translation of the enzyme may be a future candidate for antidepressants.

Marek Krzystanek

The topic of my poster was: Dysfunctional Supplementary Motor Area implication during attention and time estimation task in neuroleptic naïve Schizophrenia

We aimed to study the regions involved in controlled attention towards time estimation in patients with schizophrenia compared with healthy subjects. PET-O15-water scans were conducted in neuroleptic naïve and healthy controls during tasks which required components of time estimation. Our results showed an involvement of the supplementary motor in normality during time estimation and a deficient activation of this region in schizophrenia. There may be a dysfunctional imbalance of attentive nature during temporal processing in schizophrenia. We propose our cognitive paradigm and method for neuroimaging research to test the cognitive enhancement of neuroleptics in schizophrenia.

I found the poster session a very interesting experience. I received feed-back from other researchers that may be useful for further studies.

The organization of the programme and its content were both excellent. The main feature I was interested in was schizophrenia and brain functional mechanism and pharmacogenomics. The travel award means for me a nice regard and a support for my further daily and hard research task. Stockholm is a very nice and exciting City

I thank you

Felipe Ortuño
Travel Award P.2.068

Our work tried to find any evidence of the involvement of the val/met polymorphism of the cathecol-o-methyltransferase gene in schizophrenia and schizophrenia spectrum diseases. I found the poster session a very interesting experience in which I had the opportunity to share scientific matters arising with other authors. In my opinion, the organization of the programme and its content were both excellent. The main feature I was interested in was schizophrenia (cognitive genomics and brain mechanism).

Patricio Molero Santos

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Travel Award P.2.071

The title of my poster was: Influenza A Virus Infection causes Alterations in Expression of Synaptic Regulatory Genes combined with Changes in Cognitive and Emotional Behaviors in Mice. In this study, influenza A virus was injected into the brains of C57BL/6 mice. Long after this non-lethal infection had been cleared these animals exhibited disturbances in cognitive and emotional functions. These changes were accompanied by alterations in the transcriptional activity of genes involved in synaptic transmission as compared to control mice.

The poster sessions were very instructive and inspiring. It was great experiencing the interest of clinicians in my work. I got also valuable feedback. Since my project is only on the pre-clinical level it has been important and interesting for me to increase my knowledge on the clinical level.

Simret Beraki

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Travel Award P.2.100

The topic of my poster was „Phencyclidine (PCP) as a model for schizophrenia“. PCP is a noncompetitive NMDA glutamate receptor antagonist which induces psychotomimetic effects in humans and experimental animals. Chronic PCP exposure elicits signs of persistently altered frontal brain activity and related behaviour which are also seen in patients with schizophrenia. Secretogranin II belongs to the chromogranin family of proteins which exist in large dense core vesicles in nervous tissue. In the present study, we applied PCP to organotypic PFC slices. The results demonstrate that PCP modulates secretogranin II expression in PFC tissue in the absence of afferent inputs and that the nature of these changes is dependent upon the duration of exposure to and/or withdrawal from PCP. The poster sessions, I think, were well organized (poster area, hand-out-boxes). At the poster sessions I have obtained new ideas for my research and it was a great opportunity to get in contact with other scientists in the same field. Maybe it will develop some new collaborations. The ECNP Congress 2004 was a good possibility to combine my interests, basic and clinical research, as well as clinical aspects. In the clinical field I have got some new guidelines of therapeutic strategies. Finally I want to say that I like the gorgeous city Stockholm. Learning is a movement from moment to moment and so I think there were many „moments“ on the ECNP Congress in Stockholm.

Josef Hinterhoelzl
The poster presented the results of the first study to longitudinally investigate glucose homeostasis in people with treatment resistant schizophrenia prior to and following the initiation of clozapine treatment. The key finding is that over 50% of subjects developed glucose intolerance within three months of commencing clozapine in the absence of significant alterations in insulin homeostasis or weight. Subjects showed insulin resistance prior to commencing clozapine indicating that they were at increased risk of developing glucose intolerance, possibly due to previous treatment or factors intrinsic to schizophrenia. The fact that clozapine did not alter insulin homeostasis indicates that any effect on glucose homeostasis occurs at a more proximal level than insulin control mechanisms.

I received a lot of very useful feedback from delegates at the conference concerning the study. I am grateful that the conference organisers had the foresight to provide photocopying services- the poster handouts went like hot cakes. It was extremely useful to be able to review the other posters concerning endocrine and metabolic effects of antipsychotics and discuss the research and clinical issues with other delegates. The poster session overall was extremely well organised and well integrated into the rest of the conference. My main interests at the conference were the sessions on therapeutics and bipolar disorder. I also found the information on antidementia treatment very interesting. Many thanks for the assistance from the ECNP. Without this I would not have been able to attend.

Oliver Howes

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Travel Award P.2.135

It is with great pleasure for me to have participated in the 17th ECNP Congress in Stockholm.

The main topic of my poster was molecular neuropsychopharmacology in depression. The purpose of the study was to assess basal levels of AVP-and OT-neurophysins and to test the influence of apomorphine and clonidine injections on plasma vasopressin (AVP)-neurophysins and oxytocin(OT)-neurophysins levels, as a direct index of posterior pituitary activation, in major depressive patients and controls. The results support partially the hypothesis of a reduced vasopressinergic activity in depression.

Each day, during the poster sessions, I was very impressed by the combination of conviviality and real interest in scientific research of the delegates. It was a warm and friendly meeting. The full program of symposia, plenary lectures, educational track and poster sessions led to improve clinical practice, to discuss the latest findings in psychiatric disorders and to foster research. I have appreciated symposia concerning the treatment and the biology of bipolar disorder as cannabinoid CB1 receptors and brain function. More particularly, new treatments in depression, peptide approaches (like cortisol receptor antagonists or omega-3 fatty acid treatment) and opportunities for drug development with neuropeptides have attracted me.

I have happy memories of the 17th ECNP Congress. Not only was it my first participation at an European Congress but also it was an exceptional intellectual and cultural experience. I would like to acknowledge the Scientific Programme Committee and to give a special thanks to Mrs A-M Gibilaro.

Gabrielle Scantamburlo
Travel Award P.2.147

I am very grateful to have received an ECNP Travel Award for the poster “Antipsychotic Medication and Treatment Outcome in Schizophrenia Outpatient Care”. The 18-month documentation of process and outcome indicators in the treatment of schizophrenic patients was part of a project in the German Schizophrenia Competence Network (2.2.1.2.2: guideline-supported quality management). 31 psychiatrists in private practice in Munich were randomly assigned to a QM intervention group and control group; they then consecutively recruited 152 and 147 outpatients. The poster discussed the influence of antipsychotic medication subgroups (first or second generation antipsychotics, combination of both and switches between the two) on psychopathology (PANSS, CGI) and side effects, also in comparison with the influence of QM: In an analysis of variance, the assignment to the QM intervention or control group was more relevant in regard to improvement than the medication subgroup.

Two more posters with the titles “Subjective Quality of Life and Treatment Strategies in Schizophrenia Outpatient Care” and “Is Quality Management Cost-effective?” demonstrated further results from this successful and cost-effective QM project and I was happy to discuss them as well with interested colleagues in the same poster session.

I enjoyed the whole congress very much, so I cannot say which topic interested me most. I tried to attend many different sessions, also on topics that I am not too familiar with in my daily work. I want to thank the committee to have chosen this project on clinical research and quality management for the award as it is important to transfer and implement scientific evidence into practice for the benefit of our patients.

Ute Seemann

Travel Award P.5.015

My poster was “The influence of felbamate on sensitization to methamphetamine behavioural effects in mice. (authors: L. Landa, K. Slais, A. Sulcova).

It is known that activating antiepileptic drugs of the 3rd generation, such as felbamate can invoke psychotropic effects. They may possess attention-enhancing and antidepressant efficacy, cause anxiety, insomnia, and agitation. Although all pharmacological mechanisms of felbamate are not fully elucidated yet, many of clinical effects may be related to the inhibition of NMDA currents. There are studies that also refer to the important involvement of NMDA receptors in the development and expression of behavioural sensitization. Thus the study presented focused on investigation of felbamate influence on sensitization to methamphetamine effects on mouse locomotor/exploratory behaviour in the open field.

I found the poster session was a great opportunity for me to discuss the presented issues with people who deal with the same or similar questions, which undoubtedly helped me to get some new insights into the topic I am interested in. This was actually also the main and the most exciting feature of the congress in general – to see and meet in person people who belong to the most experienced ones on the field of neuropsychopharmacology. As I am presently trying to gain some understanding of processes associated with behavioural sensitization to various drugs of abuse and my research also involved the use of cannabinoids I very appreciated the possibility to be present at the symposium called “Cannabinoid CB1 receptors and brain function.”

Leos Landa
In the trial “Levetiracetam (Keppra®) for the treatment of alcohol withdrawal – an open prospective clinical trial” 15 patients with alcohol withdrawal syndrome were sufficiently treated with Levetiracetam. This treatment approach was safe without severe adverse events or drop-outs. Levetiracetam has a favourable pharmacologic profile that leads to a reduction of monitoring during alcohol detoxification. Additionally, levetiracetam has no abuse potential in contrast to benzodiazepines. Levetiracetam seems to be a promising substance for the treatment of AWS.

At my poster presentation, I had the opportunity to discuss the results of the trial with colleagues from all over the world. I encountered a very positive response and could build new contacts. It was a pleasant and very valuable experience. The outstanding diversity of clinical and research topics was very impressing. I am looking forward to attend the next ECNP congress in Amsterdam.

Karolina Leopold
I took part in the 17th ECNP Congress to present the poster entitled "C-terminal fragment of cocaine- and amphetamine-regulated transcript peptide attenuates cocaine- and amphetamine-induced hyperlocomotion in mice". Its main point was the finding that the active fragment of CART peptide [42-89] might be located in its most C-terminal part, based on the ability of CART [72-89] to reverse locomotor hyperactivity induced by cocaine or amphetamine injection in mice. This observation is going to be a part of my PhD thesis on the role of selected neuropeptides and their derivatives in drug dependence and pain transmission.

As I am not a clinician and work in basic science, choosing the lectures I was interested mainly in the preclinical track. Because of my field of research, the most valuable for me were the sessions on the molecular bases of addiction ("New molecular insights into addiction") and on the new drug design based on the modification of the activity of neuropeptides ("Neuropeptides, opportunities for drug development"). I also had great interest in the perspectives of the use of stem cells in the treatment of neuropsychiatric disorders ("The prospect for stem cell therapy in neuropsychopharmacology"). Much educative were the lectures on current issues in neuropsychopharmacology ("Hot topics in preclinical neuropsychopharmacology"). Although some of them were not directly related to my area of research, they gave the overall picture of current trends in the CNS investigation, which is particularly useful for me as a beginner in this area. It was also a pleasure to listen to the plenary lectures, up-to-date and delivered in a way attracting scientists of any background.

Each poster session provided the opportunity to talk directly with the authors in an informal atmosphere, facilitating straightforward sharing of experiences and enabling the talks with scientists working in different fields. This pertained also to the session on addiction, during which I presented my poster. The discussions with other participants pointed my attention to several aspects I should consider in my future work. Much of a help for the poster presenters was the possibility to copy handouts before the sessions.

I was impressed by the organisation of the Congress. Despite large number of participants, the huge venue was able to house all the lectures and satellite events without the feeling of overcrowding. Although the Congress was located outside Stockholm's city centre, efficient public transport ensured convenient transfer to and from the venue. I very much enjoyed the opening reception that gave everyone the taste of excellent Swedish food. Equally noteworthy were the everyday lunches – tasty, plentiful and easy-to-get, which is to be especially appreciated in view of the quantity of people taking part in the meeting. Besides scientific values, the Congress let the participants get familiar with the beautiful autumn townscapes of Stockholm. Although it was relatively cold, with the temperatures of around zero degrees centigrade, sightseeing time was definitely a good idea for spending free time.

It is obvious that training and the exchange of ideas contribute to the improvement in the quality of research. The participation in the ECNP Congress was a valuable experience to me, giving an update on the topics strongly related to my own field of research. This is probably also the feeling of other participants as such events improve the quality of research and give ideas for further scientific development.

Tomasz Dyląg
The presented work «D1-receptors involve in behavioral and hormonal responses in intact and ovariectomized female rats» is directed on the decision of fundamental problem of psychoneuroendocrinology which is connected to studying the opportunity of pharmacological correction of cognitive disorders under conditions of abnormal functioning hypophysis-ovary systems at different stages of pathological process, and also to the various periods of ovary cycle. The directed experimental search of pharmacological preparations, mainly neurotransmitter type action, for correction of cognitive disorders under conditions of a different degree of hypophysis-ovary system activation will allow developing new approaches and methods in treatment of cognitive and behavioral disorders at hypo- or hyperfunctions of the named system.

One of the most important problems in psychoneuroendocrinology is unravelling the multiple interrelations between nervous and endocrine systems in formation of the mental status, emotions, memory and behavior. Taking into account close interactions between endocrine and neurotransmitter systems, psychoneuroendocrinologists offer the new concept of search and development of pharmacological preparations which direct or indirect modulate functional activity of certain neurotransmitter or hormonal systems, improving or normalizing deteriorations of cognitive performance. Thus, huge amount of hormonal preparations can serve as pharmacological agents for possible application in mental diseases and on the other hand a lot of neurotropic preparations could be used for treatment of endocrine pathologies. Besides development of the new pharmacological preparations, uniting simultaneously a hormone and neurotropic agent that will allow to eliminate in parallel impairments in endocrine and neurotransmitter systems is optimum.

During the poster session there was very useful discussion of my results with some colleagues. New aspects and directions of my study related with mechanisms of action for dopaminergic drugs at imbalance of estrogens were proposed.

There were very interesting symposia about biology of schizophrenia and bipolar disorders, new treatment for depression and anxiety, cannabinoid CB1 receptors and brain function, neuropeptides and opportunities for drug development. Also, there were very nice, demonstrative and useful exhibitions of pharmaceutical companies. One feature of this congress was participation of many young scientists from different countries, special brainstorming sessions for young scientists and educational tracks.

I would like to express my gratitude to ECNP Executive Committee for receiving a Travel Award and the possibility to participate in the 17th ECNP congress. It is a great opportunity and great honour for young scientists from European countries to participate in ECNP congresses. And also, Stockholm is really marvellous city which creates a desire to visit again and again.

Julia Fedotova