Preview on highlights in Paris 2011

Michel Hamon, France
Chair Scientific Programme Committee

The 24th ECNP Congress in Paris will be the most important rendezvous for basic and clinical neuroscientists involved in translational research dedicated to brain-related diseases in 2011. It will occur at the very time of the publication of epidemiological data on the ‘Size and burden of mental disorders in Europe’, and it is expected that not only participants but also health authorities will take the unique opportunity the ECNP Congress provides to address the huge need of public support for brain research in Europe.

In line with this need, the Scientific Programme Committee (SPC) received a great number of proposals from all over the world, from which we have selected those of particular scientific excellence, on hot and original topics, different to those already covered in the ECNP congresses of the last two years.

Twenty-eight symposia and six educational updates dedicated to various aspects of neuropsychopharmacology – from basic neuroscience to the most recent development in clinical research, covering affective disorders, psychosis, anxiety, addiction and neurological disorders – will allow the world’s best experts to present and discuss their most recent data with thousands of delegates coming from the five continents. Among topics of special interest that promise to be the subject of stimulating discussions:

- Neurobiological mechanisms underlying sex and gender differences in psychiatric disorders
- The role of the brain barrier in neuropsychiatric disorders
- Convergent functional genomics in addiction research
- How early life insult may affect brain function and structure

For this congress, emphasis will also be put on the activity of the ECNP Networks Initiative, in particular the bipolar network ENBREC, which will present the most recent data on bipolar disorders and their treatments in a special dedicated symposium.

Plenary lectures will be dedicated to the ‘Present and future of deep brain stimulation for the treatment of depression’ by Helen S. Mayberg, ‘Multi-target neuroprotective-neurorestorative drugs for Alzheimer’s disease’ by Moussa B.H. Youdim (Winner of the ECNP Lifetime Achievement Award 2010) and ‘Brain adenosine and the actions of caffeine’ by Bertil Fredholm, winner of the 2011 ECNP Neuropsychopharmacology Award. As at the 2010 Congress in Amsterdam, breakfast meetings will be organised to allow young participants to meet the plenary lecturers under convivial conditions. Brainstorming sessions, directly proposed by ECNP members, will also be convenient opportunities to discuss issues of special interest for both basic and clinical neuroscientists.

The poster sessions in which more than 700 posters will be presented will give attendees the opportunity to get early access to novel findings and discuss this face-to-face.

This year, 15 satellite symposia are being organised with educational financial support provided by pharmaceutical and start-up companies, and their scientific programmes, which have also been validated by the SPC and accredited with 2 CME points each, are completely in line with the objective of ECNP to keep the scientific quality at the highest level.

We have done our very best to make your participation as scientifically fruitful as possible, and I do hope you will enjoy the 24th ECNP Congress in Paris. See you there.
ECNP members and the 24th ECNP Congress

Alexander Schubert, The Netherlands
Executive Director

The ECNP Congress is not only the flagship event in the ECNP calendar, but the meeting for ECNP members to meet one another, to interact with the Executive Committee (EC) and to participate in the General Assembly.

Members have always had preferential rates at the congress, as well as the option to organise one of the nine early morning brainstorming sessions. But we have also started to look at other ways that they can be more closely integrated into congress activities. Last year we introduced the Members’ Lounge, a dedicated space where members could meet, work or relax away from the throng of the main congress areas. And we introduced the Members’ Welcome Reception, where members could meet the EC and special guests before the welcome ceremony (where special member-only seats had been reserved).

We will continue these activities in Paris, but also have a new event: Members’ Breakfasts. These will be on the morning of Sunday 4 September and Tuesday 6 September, and will be hosted by ECNP president Joseph Zohar and other members of the EC. The breakfast will be a chance to share views about the College’s activities and future with the EC.

Invitations have been sent, however if you are interested, please let us know at secretariat@ecnp.eu. Places are limited.

Provisional scientific programme

The provisional scientific programme and the satellite symposia of the 24th ECNP Congress are available on the ECNP Congress website www.ecnp-congress.eu.

The Congress Information System (CIS) is published allowing you to search for scientific programme details and related papers, and to view the ‘congress at a glance’, maps of the congress venue and the provisional programme of the satellite symposia.

Young Researchers’ Breakfast continued

In follow-up to last year’s successful Young Researchers’ Breakfast, ECNP will continue this activity at the 24th ECNP Congress.

Two Young Researchers’ Breakfasts will be organised during the congress, giving young scientists the opportunity to meet established, senior scientists and members of the Executive Committee in a friendly, relaxed environment. The breakfasts will be held on Monday and Wednesday morning 5 and 7 September 2011.

The winners of the ECNP 2011 Fellowship Awards, Travel Awards, Regional Poster Awards and Seminar Awards, and the speakers from the Young Scientists Award symposia will be invited.

Size and Burden II: due for release at the 24th ECNP Congress

Six years ago ECNP and the European Brain Council (EBC) released in European Neuropsychopharmacology a major, multi-dimensional study on the Size and Burden of Mental Disorders in Europe1, part of a joint ECNP-EBC project to assess the prevalence, burden and cost of mental disorders in Europe.

Drawing on data from over 150,000 subjects, it showed that disorders of the brain affect in any given year almost 80 million Europeans, at a total cost to the region of some € 386 billion – approximately double the cost of cancer. In terms of disability-adjusted life years (DALY), disorders of the brain accounted for at least 32% of the total all disease burden in the EU.

The impact of the study was seismic. As well as being the journal’s most cited article ever, the cost data were instrumental in persuading the European Commission to make brain research one of the target areas of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), leading to several hundreds of millions of additional euros being made available for brain research in Europe.

Now, an expanded and updated version of the study, the culmination of three years of research, will be released at the 24th ECNP Congress on 3-7 September 2011 in Paris, France. Key findings will be announced at the welcome ceremony on Saturday 3 September, followed by detailed presentations at the Breaking News symposium (S.11) at 09.00 and a press conference at 11.15 on Monday 5 September 2011.

An overall results paper will be published in the September 2011 issue of European Neuropsychopharmacology.

The ECNP component of the study was led by Hans-Ulrich Wittchen, ECNP vice-president.

1 Volume 15 Number 4, August 2005.
The crisis in CNS investment: ECNP’s plan of action

Alexander Schubert, The Netherlands
Executive Director

2010 was a disturbing year for European neuroscience. Announcements by GlaxoSmithKline and AstraZeneca that they would be radically scaling back their CNS drug discovery programmes were followed by a cascade of other pharma companies announcing similar cut-backs. The ongoing pattern of downsizings, externalisations and outright closures had not only suddenly escalated, but seemed to be targeting CNS specifically. What was already a difficult environment was showing every sign of turning into a full-blown crisis, and one that posed very serious threats to the future of neuroscience in Europe.

In light of these developments, the Executive Committee decided that, as one of the largest and most established neuroscience organisations in Europe, ECNP had a responsibility to act. For the first time ever, the College stepped beyond its base in pure science and into the realm of public advocacy.

Engaging with some of the key stakeholders in the issue revealed the range and complexity of the reasoning behind the pull-outs. But it also suggested that CNS drug research faced a special kind of impasse, and that there might yet be a role for an independent mediator to bring the various parties together and broker some kind of way forward.

ECNP Summit on the future of CNS drug research in Europe

This was the background to the ECNP Summit on the future of CNS drug research in Europe, held in Nice, France, on 6-7 March 2011.

The summit brought together stakeholders representing all facets of the issue: major pharmaceutical companies (including those pulling out of CNS), biotechnology firms, the European Commission, the European Medicines Agency (EMA), patients’ organisations and academia, as well as the heads of other European and international organisations involved in the research and treatment of brain disorders. The meeting was closed and off-the-record to ensure discussion was full and frank.

Surprisingly perhaps for a meeting addressing such a difficult and divisive problem, the level of engagement, candour and co-operation was extremely high. The atmosphere remained throughout the meeting highly collaborative and productive, and provided very encouraging signals that the will to preserve and foster neuroscience in Europe is strong.

The summit also provided some more practical dividends. It helped to clarify the nature and scope of the challenges facing the field, both scientifically and economically. It resulted in a range of interim measures that, even if they will not necessarily bring industry immediately back into the field, will nevertheless help to protect and promote research activity in the region. And it suggested a role for ECNP as the host of an ongoing discussion about CNS research investment and strategies of remediation.

A report, prepared by David Nutt and Guy Goodwin, summarising the meeting and the ideas generated for minimising the potential damage to the field is published in the July issue of the ECNP journal European Neuropsychopharmacology (21 [2011] 495-99). A highly successful press conference was held in London with many press citations. Further follow-up activities are also planned, and will be announced in these pages.

To read the report and the press release, visit the ECNP website www.ecnp.eu.

The Alliance for Biomedical Research in Europe

Alexander Schubert, The Netherlands
Executive Director

The crisis of research investment may be especially acute in CNS, but it is a problem affecting many areas of biomedical science in Europe.

To address the problem, a group of European scientific associations clubbed together to launch the Alliance for Biomedical Research in Europe. The Biomed Alliance is a new initiative designed to give Europe’s largest medical research associations a platform from which to give coordinated input into European science policy. A key aim is to draw attention to the relatively low level of Europe’s research spend (1.8% of Gross Domestic Product, compared to 2.7% for the USA and 3.4% for Japan).

“Our new alliance aims to give a single, powerful voice to the European biomedical research community, maximising its impact on research budgets, covering all health disciplines, for improved health of all European citizens,” says Ulf Smith, the inaugural president of the Biomed Alliance.

“Otherwise Europe will continue to stagnate, stifling innovation and competitiveness while compromising the health and quality of life of its citizens.”

ECNP joined the Alliance in March 2011. More information about its aims can be found at www.biomedeurope.org.
Report on the ECNP Workshop on Neuropsychopharmacology for Young Scientists in Europe, 3-6 March 2011, Nice, France

The weather was good and Nice looked beautiful under the sun during the first week of March, but the hundred young scientists that were invited by ECNP to the Workshop for Young Scientists were not there to enjoy the city’s delights, but to learn from each other and to share new research data and experience in the context of an informal, highly interactive, and intensive meeting.

Top senior scientists were invited to give comprehensive, stimulating lectures for the young investigators on molecular, behavioural and clinical neuropsychopharmacology. ECNP sponsored travel and accommodation expenses to young scientists in the field of neuropsychopharmacology and related areas, so they could participate in a lively poster session and attend crisp oral presentations with their peers. A jury of senior scientists selected some of the best posters for presentation at the forthcoming 24th ECNP Congress in Paris. The special topic of 2011’s workshop was ‘schizophrenia’, but the lectures covered the whole spectrum of neuropsychopharmacology, including outstanding talks by John Kelsoe, Michael Owen, Oliver Stiedl, Kerry Resler, Franz Vollenweider, Richard Keefe, Jaanus Harro and Shitij Kapur.

I enjoyed the meeting and learnt a lot, and I just feel sad because this was my last ECNP Workshop as chair. But life goes on and I thought that it was the right time to hand the position to somebody else who would continue and build on the success of the meeting. Hence, it is my great pleasure to announce that the ECNP Executive Committee has approved my suggestion and named Mark Millan as new chair of the ECNP Workshop. I am confident that the 2012 edition will be even better and look forward to coming back to Nice in March 2012!

Input from participants

P4.001- Mechanism and behavioural consequences of agonist-induced upregulation of alpha 7 nicotinic acetylcholine receptor levels in the rat brain

Please tell us something about your background.
Graduated as a M.Sc. in human biology from Copenhagen University in 2006, I did a so-called industrial Ph.D. at Copenhagen University in collaboration with the biotech company NeuroSearch A/S on the alpha7 nicotinic receptor.

What did you learn at the workshop?
I think the senior speakers were good at being educational and showing the big picture rather than just their own data. Since I haven’t worked with genetic studies, this part was particularly useful for me.

What did you think about the poster sessions?
Well organised! It was a good idea for them to be mandatory, since these evening poster sessions can sometimes be a little less than crowded.

Did you make any useful contacts?
Yes, in fact there were a few people working with things related to my research.

P3.019- Frontal cortex serotonin transporter binding is positively associated with basal physiological stress reactivity in healthy volunteers

Please tell us something about your background.
I am a medical doctor with clinical experience in neurology and psychiatry. The last seven years I have been involved in brain research at the Neurobiology Research Unit, Copenhagen University Hospital, Rigshospitalet, and Center for Integrated Molecular Brain Imaging (Cimbi). The endeavour of my work is trying to uncover neurobiological correlates to vulnerability for developing neuropsychiatric disease. I have primarily worked with molecular imaging of serotonergic neurotransmission, genetic and personality risk factors and stress biology.

What did you learn at the workshop?
Importantly, I got very useful expert feedback on a paper that I was preparing. Also I got introduced to subjects as genome-wide association studies in psychiatry research that was quite new to me.
What did you think about the poster sessions?  
They created a lot of interaction and discussion that could not have worked in the lecture frame, and the atmosphere was quite cosy too.

Did you make any useful contacts?  
I believe so.

What was your overall impression of the workshop?  
Nice, focused and very interactive, I enjoyed it.

Sana Al Awabdh, France  
P.1.016 - Control of the dendritic targeting of the 5-HT\(_{1A}\) serotonin receptor as an alternative antidepressant therapy

Please tell us something about your background.  
After high school, I started biological studies at the university in Paris, where I obtained an MSc in molecular and cellular biology in 2007. Since I have always been interested in pharmacology and neuroscience, I chose Michel Hamon’s laboratory for my Master’s research. My project there was realised under Michele Darmon’s supervision. Because research progressed well, I decided to continue for my PhD. My research concerns the identification of partner proteins involved in the membrane targeting of the serotonin 5-HT\(_{1A}\) receptor.

What did you learn at the workshop?  
During this workshop, I have learnt a lot about clinical neuropsychopharmacology and especially about the molecular and clinical aspects of schizophrenia. I enjoyed the junior speakers’ session involving the neuroimaging of psychiatric disorders.

What did you think about the poster sessions?  
The poster sessions were very well organised. Unlike conferences that I have participated in during my PhD, I had time to see all the posters I was interested in and I could discuss with their authors in a friendly framework. Moreover, it was easy and particularly stimulating to interact with the seniors who visited my poster; I particularly remember the fruitful discussion I had with Sven Ove Ögren.

Did you make any useful contacts?  
It was a great opportunity to meet young scientists with different backgrounds and from all over Europe. I met psychiatrists, psychologists and neuroscientists and it was very interesting to discuss various topics that I do not usually talk about.

What was your overall impression of the workshop?  
I really enjoyed this event because it was a unique occasion to interact with young European scientists and renowned researchers. All discussions took place in an informal atmosphere, while we could enjoy delicious French specialties. We were lucky because this year the Nice carnival was held during the Workshop. For all these reasons, I am warmly grateful to ECNP for having given me the opportunity to participate in this Workshop which I will recommend to all my colleagues.

Christoph Anacker, United Kingdom

P.1.036 - Antidepressants modulate human hippocampal neurogenesis by activating the glucocorticoid receptor

Please tell us something about your background.  
I studied Neuroscience at the International Max-Planck Research School in Germany and at Stanford University in California. I am currently in the final year of my PhD studies at the Institute of Psychiatry in London, where I am working on the cellular and molecular mechanisms which underlie the effects of antidepressants on human hippocampal neurogenesis.

What did you learn at the workshop?  
The ECNP Workshop 2011 was a great experience for me, not only because it covered the latest work in my own research field perfectly, but also because it combined several aspects of preclinical and clinical research. Both the oral presentations and the poster presentations covered the wide spectrum of neuropsychopharmacology. This platform provided a great opportunity for me to broaden my knowledge about general research in the field, and also to gain more insight into the ongoing work in my own area, which was illuminated from various different angles at the workshop.

All junior speakers and poster presenters were exceptionally motivated and presented exciting research of the highest scientific quality.

What did you think about the poster sessions?  
The discussions during the poster sessions were stimulating and provided an excellent opportunity to establish new contacts with international researchers, and to develop ideas for future collaborative projects and experiments.

What was your overall impression of the workshop?  
Overall, the ECNP Workshop 2011 was an exciting experience with inspiring presentations in an excellent environment.
ECNP Workshop on Neuropsychopharmacology for Young Scientists in Europe, 15-18 March 2012, Nice, France

**Call for papers**

ECNP Targeted Expert Meetings, 2-3 September 2011

Four Targeted Expert Meetings (TEMs) have been organised, just before the 24th ECNP Congress in Paris.

The four main topics are:
- Affective Disorders and Antidepressants
- Anxiety Disorders and Anxiolytics
- Basic and Clinical Neuroscience
- Dementia

Further information about the TEMs, including the provisional programme is available via the ECNP website www.ecnp.eu. TEMs can be attended by invitation only.

ECNP Consultation Meeting, 18-20 March 2012, Nice, France

The 2012 ECNP Consultation Meeting will focus on the relation, the assessment and treatment aspects of cognition and schizophrenia. The provisional programme is available on the ECNP website www.ecnp.eu.

ECNP School of Neuropsychopharmacology: extending the model

Alexander Schubert, The Netherlands

ECNP Office

The first ECNP School of Neuropsychopharmacology was held in Oxford, United Kingdom, in 2009, and has already become one of the most successful events in the ECNP educational calendar. Every year it gives 40 to 50 young clinicians the chance to receive an intensive, week-long programme of training in neuropsychopharmacology from a faculty of international experts.

The format has been so successful that moves are now underway to extend it to other schools, with an ECNP School of Geriatric Neuropsychopharmacology and an ECNP School of Child and Adolescent Neuropsychopharmacology both in the pipeline. Sites and local coordinators are still in the process of being finalised, but if all goes according to plan, one of the new schools could be up and running as early as next year.

The goal is to integrate the schools within an ‘ECNP certificate’ programme that offers a recognised European credential in neuropsychopharmacology. “This will be a major step forward in creating a common European standard in training in neuropsychopharmacology,” said ECNP School Committee chair, Guy Goodwin, “and a significant achievement.”

ECNP School, 3-8 July 2011, Oxford, United Kingdom

For the third ECNP School of Neuropsychopharmacology in Oxford, United Kingdom, participants, from 21 different European countries, have been selected via the ECNP Advisory Board of National Societies. Where no relevant National Society was available, recommendations were solicited from ECNP members in these countries. Countries represented this year include Serbia, Poland, Moldova, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria – an encouraging sign that the School is penetrating these high-need areas.

The programme of the ECNP School can be found on the ECNP website www.ecnp.eu.
Report from the winners of the 2009 ECNP Research Grant for Young Scientists

Silvia Alboni, Italy

Since 1998, my primary focus has been the study of the neurobiological basis of affective disorders at pre-clinical level through my work as a scientist in the laboratory of Nicoletta Brunello at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia.

During this important period in my life, I had the chance to work in some of the most well-known laboratories in Europe and the United States. This allowed me to take part in numerous international meetings and, through contact with many of my peers, I came to question why, despite all the efforts of research in this field, treating depression is still a challenge when it comes to clinical practice.

Participating in some of the meetings organised by ECNP, I concluded that a lack of communication between the preclinical and the clinical world is still a significant problem, which makes the understanding of psychiatric diseases much more difficult. This can also explain, therefore, the lack of adequate treatments. This is why I am particularly interested in translating preclinical findings at a clinical level since, in my opinion, this approach will bring about an improvement in the overall management of psychiatric diseases.

The ECNP Research Grant for Young Scientists gave me a unique opportunity to compare data obtained in animals to those in humans, and to understand how to better approach the clinical world. I have been very fortunate in having the opportunity to collaborate with Carmine Pariante, a world-renowned clinician who is an expert in the field of the complex neuro-endocrine-immuno interactions and the creator of original theories about depression and stress related disorders.

Carmine Pariante is truly inspirational; interacting with him and his research group has been enriching from both a scientific and, as importantly, a personal viewpoint.

Thanks to Carmine Pariante and the kind support of ECNP it has been possible for me to study the role of cytokines in the brain. The results obtained will help to shed light on theories relating to the importance of these mediators in mental diseases and will, I believe, in time open up a whole new field of research.

In such difficult times for scientific research this opportunity has been unique and unforgettable, and has increased my determination to pursue a future in this field. I would like to thank most sincerely ECNP and the Award Jury for this opportunity, which I strove to make the best of.

It is my heartfelt wish to contribute to the treatment of these debilitating mental diseases.

Alessandro Colasanti, Italy

I can definitely state the ECNP Research Grant for Young Scientists contributed to changes in both my professional and personal life.

At the time of my application for the grant I was based at the laboratory of Experimental Psychiatry, Maastricht University, working on a neuropsychopharmacology research project to develop an experimental human model of panic, supervised by Koen Schruers. The experience gained in Maastricht had been extremely exciting and formative. Nevertheless, I wished to learn a technique to look more specifically at the mechanisms of action of neuropsychopharmacological agents in vivo in human subjects. For this purpose, I wanted to develop skills in positron emission tomography (PET), a fascinating technique that enables the in vivo imaging of receptor function in the human brain. I thought the ideal context for this type of research would be the newborn Neuropsychopharmacology Unit at Imperial College London, led by David Nutt, and so I applied for an ECNP Grant wishing to go there.

My research proposal consisted of a study on the involvement of endogenous opioids in the regulation of the affective response to an experimental panic provocation, using PET in healthy volunteers. Shortly after my arrival at Imperial College, I realised my project was much more complex than I had initially thought. My plan was based on the assumption that a particular PET technique (the use of the PET tracer [11C]carfentanil) allowed the release of brain endogenous opioids to be measured in an effective and reliable manner. However, this assumption was not supported by sufficiently strong scientific evidence, and I realised it was necessary to validate and characterise the technique before its application in a study such as the one I was proposing. To do so I had to go deeply through purely methodological scientific literature, to learn from preclinical studies in animal models, and to be able to translate them into a reasonable hypothesis to support my research project.

One of the greatest concerns during this exciting period was that time was running faster than expected. At the end of the grant period I was in the middle of the experimental phase of my research, having spent most of the year in studying, learning, and preparing the imaging experiment. It was necessary to look for other sources of funding to stay longer in London and complete my project.

Finally, the study was a success: in July 2010 the experimental phase was completed and in August the preliminary results were ready. We have been able to demonstrate a dose-dependent pharmacologically induced release of endogenous opioids in the human brain in vivo. These results validated the use of PET and [11C]carfentanil for further clinical applications. It was very rewarding that the presentation of my results was accepted at the Breaking News Symposium at the 23rd ECNP Congress in Amsterdam, in September 2010. I have now been awarded a fellowship from the Wellcome Trust to work for three years at Imperial College London as a clinical research fellow. My main interest is PET imaging, and my dream is to stay here for a long time, trying to pursue an academic career. I have been lucky my wife followed me, and that life in London has been wonderful so far.

Thanks to ECNP for the great contribution it gave to my development, career and personal life. I wish great success to all the next grant awardees.

Valeria Mondelli from King’s College London, United Kingdom, will visit the Genetics Unit, IRCCS, Centro S. Giovanni di Dio, Fatebenefratelli, Brescia, Italy.

Ruth van Holst from the Academic Medical Center (AMC), University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands, will visit the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom.

Michiel Verheij from the Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Center in the Netherlands, will visit the Department of Pharmacological Sciences, University of Milan, Italy.

ECNP wishes all three winners success and looks forward to hearing about their experiences.
Interview with two new honorary members: Jan M. van Ree and Stuart A. Montgomery

Jan M. van Ree

ECNP in 24 years has grown from nothing to being one of the most successful organisations of its type. What are the key ingredients of this success, do you think? ECNP has a special role in European neuroscience – it’s the one place where all the different facets come together. This is one of the reasons our biennial meeting of less than 300 participants 20 years ago has grown into the current annual congress of almost 8,000. But there have been some very practical factors at work too. One is dedicated, professional management, and especially the financial rigour that this brings with it. Having the ECNP Office allows us to be much more structured and disciplined in how we manage our finances and organise our activities in general, and it has allowed us to learn from our experiences and continuously improve. This kind of memory function, and its accumulation of many years of skills and knowledge and lessons-learnt, can’t be outsourced. The second key success factor, I would say, is scientific quality. This is, in fact, closely related to the first, because it’s our financial strength that guarantees our independence. And it’s this independence – and the confidence it gives people in ECNP’s scientific integrity – that makes our congresses and meetings so attractive.

What can the organisation do to preserve and build on these strengths?
First, keep the quality of annual congresses high and make sure they continue to be a forum where participants feel at home. Second, ensure our relationship with industry remains clear and transparent – to all parties. Third, I would say, continue to put emphasis on young scientists, since they are really the future of the field (as well as of ECNP of course). Fourth, continue to broaden our interdisciplinary scope, especially to basic neuroscience and clinical applications, so that ECNP becomes the forum for the science of the brain in all its different facets. And lastly, work on enhancing our profile in Europe, so scientists, patient organisations and doctors across the field are aware of who we are and what we do. Get these things right, and I think ECNP will continue to thrive.

But is neuropsychopharmacology, long term, the right hub for this kind of interdisciplinary exchange? Can the field, in your view, remain interesting and relevant?
The field is moving quickly, it’s true, with new areas like genetics and imaging rightly attracting young researchers. But at the same time our basic understanding of what is deviant in the patient’s brain remains, in many ways, where it was 40 years ago. We know the molecular process of secondary damage after stroke, for example, or how to induce panic attacks, but we still can’t actually block either. We are still remarkably ignorant about the underlying pathologies of neurological and psychiatric conditions. New fields such as neuroimaging or genetics can be very helpful in this, especially in understanding deviancy. But translating this research into medicines requires pharmacology. If we do manage to break the current deadlock in brain research, it will be because of the convergence of these fields has finally sparked a fundamental conceptual shift. It’s impossible to know when that breakthrough will come, but neuropsychopharmacology will be part of it. The field is still a vital and interesting place to be.

Your view on academic independence is an especially rigorous one. It runs, however, somewhat counter to the increasing trend to commercialise university research. What are the implications of this for science?
Collaboration with industry – in the case of contract research, for example – can be productive. And universities are playing a greater and greater role in drug discovery, so good contacts are important, and going to be more so. Only the big companies, after all, have the resources to...

Jan Marius van Ree’s retirement in April 2010 as professor of psychopharmacology at the Utrecht University Medical Centre and director of its Rudolf Magnus Institute of Neuroscience ended a 40-year career in neuropsychopharmacology research marked by extraordinary productivity and outstanding scientific achievement. A pioneer in biomedical approaches, his work on addiction, the social behaviour of animals, the effects of neuropeptides on brain function, and neuroplasticity has been extremely influential in linking pre-clinical and clinical research into brain disorders. In 2010, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to neuropsychopharmacological science, he was elected as an honorary member of ECNP.

Jan van Ree has also held some of ECNP’s most senior positions, including treasurer (1989-1995), president (1998-2002) and editor-in-chief (with Stuart Montgomery) of European Neuropsychopharmacology (1990-2010). But, perhaps even more importantly, he has been the architect of ECNP’s operational infrastructure and for two decades a source of continuity and guidance in ECNP’s behind-the-scenes management.

Here he looks back on his more than 20 years of active involvement with ECNP and considers the organisation’s future.

Jan van Ree
How did you become a research neuropsychopharmacologist?
I grew up in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia), but when the time for university came, I was ready for a broader horizon, so I took the – in those days somewhat unusual – step of going to England to study medicine. I took a diversion into zoology at University College London (UCL), and got as far as beginning my PhD in genetics before deciding that it was medicine that was my real interest and where I would likely contribute most. So I switched. Psychiatry was an especial specialty to follow because UCL was such an important centre in the field, although at that time the emphasis was on psychological rather than psychopharmacological treatment. After training at St. George's Hospital, during which I was already collaborating with the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, I was lucky enough to be awarded a research fellowship from the Medical Research Council (MRC) to work with Alec Coppen at his MRC Unit. This was especially fortuitous because part of Coppen’s personal mission was to put psychiatry on a more rigorously scientific, evidence-based footing – something that, after my own training as a biologist, I’d also come to see as overdue. This was the background to developing the MADRS. I was entirely focused on and passionately interested in identifying the core psychopathological features of depression and working out how these could be rated to measure severity of the illness. The MADRS was an important step forward, but its effect was to typecast me – at quite a young age – as an expert in depression alone. I have been involved in the development of every licensed antidepressant since then.

What are the big changes in the field you’ve noticed since you first began?
In my early career, I think it’s fair to say, the efficacy of treatments was assessed largely on the basis of careful observation, typically assembled via testimonials from practitioners. Today it would be unthinkable to try to establish the efficacy of a treatment for a neuropsychiatric disorder on this basis alone. Rigorously protocolled, placebo-controlled studies are now standard for establishing the efficacy of a treatment. This move towards a more scientific and disciplined approach represents a major shift of culture within the psychiatric community.

What would you say to a young scientist contemplating entering the field?
I would be encouraging, of course, but with some reservations. Neuroscience, like other specialities, needs a constructive environment to thrive and, it has to be said, the positive environment that has been assumed as a given in the past is being eroded. Currently, economic factors obviously play their part in restricting activity but perhaps more important is the increasingly restrictive regulation applied by Governments to drug development. There has been a positive relationship between academic scientists and the pharmaceutical industry with the industry providing a major source of innovation and expertise. It seems perverse to move to such restrictive regulation and an often suffocating reimbursement system that seems almost designed to drive industry from the field. We are currently seeing the closure of important industry funded neuroscience centres and even for those lucky enough to get jobs and funding, it’s a very challenging climate. For those who are committed to staying, I would say: regardless of everything, keep focused on finding the best treatments – the ultimate goal, let’s never forget, is always better lives for patients. Always follow the data, wherever it takes you. Thinking outside accepted patterns of interpretation may be extremely difficult, but the most important findings often defy instinct.

What do you think can be done to meet the challenges the field now faces
First, we should seek a revision of attitudes – a return to

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Stuart Montgomery, emeritus professor of psychiatry at Imperial College London, is one of the world’s foremost authorities in clinical psychopharmacology. A pioneer in the assessment of depression, he developed the Montgomery-Åsberg Depression Rating Scale (MADRS) with Marie Åsberg while he was still in training thirty years later it remains one of the most commonly used symptom-severity scales for evaluating antidepressant treatment efficacy. He is one of ECNP’s longest-standing and most active members, having sat on the College’s first Executive Committee from 1987 to 1989, and serving as president from 1992 to 1995. One of the founders of European Neuropsychopharmacology, he co-edited the journal for 20 years. He saw the need for a constructive exchange of views on design issues and founded the ECNP Consensus Meeting series which he chaired for twelve years. In recognition of his outstanding contribution to neuropsychopharmacological science he was awarded the ECNP Lilly Neuroscience Award in 1999 and in 2010 Stuart Montgomery was elected as an honorary member of ECNP.
data-driven analysis without influence from political imperatives. I also think there has been a certain demonisation of the pharmaceutical industry which has been damaging to research in our field, reducing access to resources and expertise; it has slowed (and in some cases stopped) the flow of good drugs onto the market. There’s no rational basis for the frequent hostility towards data produced with the support of the industry. A good study, using sound methodology and having rigorous audits, will produce reliable results whatever the sources of its funding. And the same goes for poor studies: biased studies can be conducted just as easily by academics in university laboratories as researchers in pharmaceutical companies. This needs to be recognised and confronted. The public, the media, and indeed governments need to be helped towards a better understanding of what constitutes good scientific method. There also has to be a more realistic appreciation of where medicines come from. At the moment, drug development is of necessity largely left to industry – that’s the model we have. We can either accept it and work with it, or create a new model – a complex undertaking, needless to say, and no one really has the appetite for it.

Closing thoughts?
Good science is uncomfortable. This is perhaps, when I think about it, the most important realisation of my career. Discomfort and disruption are essential parts of the creative process. When I think of my own work, my best insights have always been deeply uncomfortable experiences. But that discomfort factor has to be recognised and encouraged. Science isn’t supposed to be an easy career.

Bertil Fredholm wins the 2011 ECNP Neuropsychopharmacology Award in basic science research

Julien Mendlewicz, Belgium
Chair ECNP Award Committee

Professor of pharmacology at the Karolinska Institute, Sweden, Fredholm has built over the course of his 30-year career an outstanding body of work on adenosine and its receptors, which has not only significantly advanced the understanding of physiological and pathophysiological CNS mechanisms, but has provided new targets for drug development across a range of brain disorders.

Building on his PhD research on the sympathetic nervous system and transmitter regulation, Bertil Fredholm came to the early realisation that the factor released by nerve stimulation in intact tissues regulating transmitter release, actions and circulation is adenosine. He was then able to observe how its release from effector cells responded to nerve activity or reduced circulation and how adenosine could traverse the synapse to act presynaptically to limit transmitter release in several tissues. Bertil Fredholm has documented the generality of this concept in a series of highly influential papers and review articles.

Speaking on behalf of the ECNP Award Committee: “Bertil Fredholm’s leadership in the field and outstanding research achievements, based on broad knowledge and outstanding scientific intelligence, make him the ideal candidate for this award.”

The award and its prize of €20,000 will be presented at the welcome ceremony of the 24th ECNP Congress, 3-7 September 2011, Paris, France. Bertil Fredholm will also deliver a plenary award lecture on Monday 5 September 2011 at 11.15-12.00.

25 years ECNP

In 2012 ECNP celebrates its 25th birthday. To mark this event, a series of activities is being organised to take stock of the field, celebrate 25 years of achievement and look to the future. So for the 25th ECNP Congress, 13-17 October 2012, Vienna, Austria, a special programme is being developed to explore perspectives and developments that do not typically fall within the ambit of the ECNP Congress.

In particular, the welcome ceremony will feature a special keynote lecture – a departure from our usual format – by Colin Blakemore, professor of neuroscience at the University of Oxford and former chief executive of the British Medical Research Council (MRC), United Kingdom, on ‘The plasticity of the brain’.

The scientific programme of the congress will also show some change as six plenary lectures are scheduled, two on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday each. Four of the plenary speakers are already confirmed: Tom Insel, director of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH); Brigitte Kieffer, professor of Neurobiology and Genetics at the Institut de Génétique et de Biologie Moléculaire et Cellulaire (IGBMC), France; Ruth McKernan, chief scientific officer, Pfizer, United Kingdom; and Tamás Freund, one of the winners of ‘The Brain Prize 2011’ of the Grete Lundbeck European Brain Research Foundation, director of the Institute of Experimental Medicine at the Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Hungary.

Further details on the scientific programme and updates on the anniversary activities will follow in the next ECNP Matters, in our monthly E-news and on the ECNP Congress website www.ecnp-congress.eu.
New websites launched!

ECNP is proud to inform you that next to the launch of the two completely new websites, the ECNP member pages have also been refurbished.

Via our general website www.ecnp.eu, where you will find all information about ECNP, our meetings, awards, special projects and initiatives and publications, you can enter the specially designed ‘member pages’, containing all the familiar information – and more – for members. In particular, we would like to draw your attention to the new ‘call for news and/or job postings under the header ‘Members’ Forum’.

For the annual congress, we have created a separate website: www.ecnp-congress.eu. All information related to the 24th ECNP Congress can be found here.

Please take a look. If you have any suggestions on how to improve the websites even more, don’t hesitate to let us know by e-mail at secretariat@ecnp.eu.

New: call for applications

ECNP Neuropsychopharmacology Award and ECNP Lifetime Achievement Award.

You can now apply directly for these awards instead of having to be nominated. However, if you know a suitable candidate you may still submit an application on their behalf! Please visit the ECNP website www.ecnp.eu for more information.

New: Talk of the Month

ECNP recently started a new initiative, the ‘Talk of the Month’. On a regular basis, a webcast of a short presentation will be published on our website. Topics of these talks will vary. Keep an eye on the webcast section of the ECNP website www.ecnp.eu to view them all.

News from ECNP Networks Initiative (ENI)

Patrice Boyer, France, ENI chairman
Nic van der Wee, The Netherlands, scientific coordinator

The origin of the ECNP Networks Initiative (ENI), initiated in 2008 by the late Yves Lecrubier on the instigation of ECNP, was the concept of fostering European neuropsychopharmacology by encouraging ECNP scientists to form active European research networks. These networks should be able to collect and analyse clinical, psychological, biological and therapeutic variables throughout Europe in a standardised way, creating platforms for successful European grant applications.

Since 2008 four networks have been launched: the Anxiety Disorders Research Network (ADRN), Brain Imaging, Child and Adolescent Neuropsychopharmacology and Suicide. In parallel two other already existing European networks received support from the ENI: the European Network of Bipolar Research Expert Centres (ENBREC) and the European Group of Research in Schizophrenia (EGRIS). It is expected that more networks can be launched in the future.

The main role of the ENI has been to provide targeted support and assistance to help the networks develop and run their projects and to submit grant applications. The ENI networks have proven very productive – noticeably by the number of grants obtained – which is encouraging ECNP to continue to support this initiative. Furthermore, ECNP wishes to increase the visibility and contributions of the networks within ECNP amongst others, by more integrating ENI activities within future ECNP congresses. Further information on the ENI and the networks will be available on the ECNP website www.ecnp.eu.
News from EBC: European Year of the Brain 2014

Alastair Benbow, Belgium
Executive Director EBC

Call for a European Year of the Brain gathers momentum – now likely to occur in 2014

Following an extensive campaign by the European Brain Council (EBC) and its members, 2014 has now been targeted by the European Commission as the European Year of the Brain.

Meetings have been held with many European Commissioners and their teams including DG Research, DG Health and Consumer Protection and with the team of Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso. We have developed in outline the very ambitious public campaign that we would intend to run in 2014, targeting huge numbers to increase awareness, reduce stigma, educate on health and disease and its prevention in an entertaining and engaging way.

Following on from the Consensus Document and alongside the updating of the study of the joint ECNP-EBC Task Force on the prevalence, burden and cost of mental disorders in Europe (‘Size and Burden of Mental Disorders in Europe’), we will partner with the European Commission to conduct a detailed study exploring the economic burden of brain diseases in Europe.

EBC asked for indications of support for a European Year of the Brain from interested groups and more than 200 organisations from across Europe – representing millions of patients, carers, scientists and health care professionals – have already given their support. We will continue to seek support, engagement and involvement from all interested parties as we make the European Year of the Brain 2014 a reality.

As well as many European initiatives, the European Year of the Brain 2014 will feature even more national initiatives, addressing real issues at a local level, where they have the potential to have the most impact.

EBC would like to say a big thank you to all those who have participated so far; your support has been incredibly helpful. But we cannot be complacent; we need to maintain the momentum and ensure that in 2014 we deliver the most impactful European Year seen so far, with a lasting legacy that will result in more research with better outcomes for patients and carers for decades to come.

2014 may seem a long way ahead, but in delivering a project of this importance it is not. Considerable work has to be done to make this a reality and deliver on its promise. Your help at local, national, regional and European level will be vital.

More information can be found at www.europeanbraincouncil.org

ECNP-supported educational symposium at the 14th Meeting of the Spanish Society of Psychiatry

Celso Arango, Spain
Chair

On Thursday 21 October 2010 the ECNP symposium at the 14th Meeting of the Spanish Society of Psychiatry in Barcelona (www.psiciatriabarcelona2010.org/jueso23) took place. The symposium “Translational research in mental health” was held in the auditorium and was attended mainly by Spanish psychiatrists and researchers with interest in translational research.

Celso Arango (ECNP Executive Committee member) chair of the symposium presented all the ECNP initiatives for young researchers (www.ecnp.eu), after which three speakers covered different areas of basic-clinical collaboration in mental health research.

Juan Antonio Micó, involved with ECNP for a long time, reviewed the literature on animal models in psychiatric research. He shared his own results with different animal models for pain, schizophrenia and depression. In particular novel data on milnacipran, a serotonin/norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor (SNRI), in a model of neuropathic pain (chronic constriction injury of the sciatic nerve) in rats, were presented.

Michel Hamon (chair ECNP Scientific Programme Committee) focused his presentation on mouse models of depression with particular attention to those derived from genetic manipulations. He reported notable data obtained in his laboratory with transgenic mice deficient in glucocorticoid receptor expression in the brain on the one hand, and knock-out mice devoid of the serotonin transporter – the molecular target of SSRI antidepressants – on the other hand. These data clearly showed the great interest of genetic models for a better knowledge of physiopathological mechanisms underlying psychiatric diseases in general, and mood disorders in particular.

Oscar Marín (member of the ECNP Scientific Advisory Panel for Basic and Clinical Neuroscience) summarised his own work with neuregulin-1 (Nrg1) and its receptor ErbB4, both encoded by genes that have been repeatedly linked to schizophrenia. He reviewed the novel findings on the biological function of Nrg1 and ErbB4 in mice, with a focus on the development of inhibitory circuits in the cerebral cortex. All this knowledge was put in context of the development of new therapies for treating the disorder.

Translational Research in Mental Health
Chair: Celso Arango, Spain

Strategies to develop better animal models for mental disorders
Juan-Antonio Micó, Spain

Translational research in psychiatry: promising insights from genetically based models
Michel Hamon, France

Let’s listen to neuroscience: why in mental disorders puberty is already too late?
Oscar Marín, France
ECNP-supported educational symposium at the annual meeting of the Austrian Society of Neuropsychopharmacology and Biological Psychiatry in 2010

Siegfried Kasper, Austria

The first ECNP-supported educational symposium at the annual meeting of the Austrian Society of Neuropsychopharmacology and Biological Psychiatry (ÖEGPB) in November 2010 was very successful and underlined the necessity of linking the efforts of the European community on a national level. The president of ECNP, Joseph Zohar, and David Baldwin, member of the ECNP Scientific Advisory Panel and ECNP’s liaison with the European Medicines Agency, gave state-of-the-art lectures on the neuropsychopharmacology of trauma as well as of anxiety disorders.

Over 350 participants witnessed these lectures, in which the authors not only provided an overview of the literature but also included their own personal experience of treatment with patients suffering from this disorder. Joseph Zohar emphasised that not all traumatised patients should be considered as one group and treated with the same procedure. Underlying genetic as well as further resilience variables contribute to a patient-tailored treatment approach. He also mentioned his own line of research that focuses on the glucocorticoid receptors in the brain with the possibility to stop the disease process as early after the trauma appears as possible with the administration of cortisone.

David Baldwin clarified the disease entities of the different anxiety disorders and pointed out that various treatment strategies are nowadays available for these diseases. Although SSRIs have been demonstrated to be helpful for most of the diseases it is apparent that newer treatment modalities like pregabalin or dual acting antidepressants are helpful, for instance in the treatment of general anxiety disorders (GAD).

Both lecturers not only discussed the recent findings but also engaged the audience in vivid discussions and encouraged them to bring own case histories to be discussed on the level of the current literature and treatment algorithms. The ECNP symposium demonstrated that patients are the same in different countries and progress is possible if we combine the different insights available for the pathophysiology and treatment of the patients.

ECNP symposium

Chairs: Siegfried Kasper, Austria
Gary Sachs, USA

Recent advances in pharmacotherapy of depression and anxiety disorder
David Baldwin, United Kingdom

Mainstream of European neuropsychopharmacology
Joseph Zohar, Israel

Meetings national societies

German Association of Neuropsychopharmacology and Pharmacopsychiatry (AGNP)

27th Symposium of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Neuropsychopharmakologie und Pharmacopsychiatrie
5-8 October 2011, Munich, Germany
Information: kongress2011.agnp.de

Spanish Society of Biological Psychiatry

XV Spanish Congress of Psychiatry
8-11 November 2011, Oviedo, Spain
Information: www.psiiquatriaoviedo2011.org

Meetings related organisations

National Congress of the Swiss Society of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy
14-16 September 2011
Information: www.psychiatrie-kongress.ch/ (French or German)

15th World Congress of Psychiatry
18-22 September 2011, Buenos Aires, Argentina

5th World Congress on Controversies in Neurology (CONy) - Asia Pacific
Life Course Related Conditions
13-16 October 2011, Beijing, China
Information: convetmed.com/cony/2011/

7th European Congress on Violence in Clinical Psychiatry
19-22 October 2011, Prague, Czech Republic
Information: www.oudconsultancy.nl/prague_cfa/

7th International Congress on Vascular Dementia
20-23 October 2011, Riga, Latvia
Information: www.kenes.com/Vascular

50th ACNP Annual Meeting
4-8 December 2011, Waikoloa, Hawaii
Information: www.acnp.org

20th European Congress of Psychiatry
3-6 March 2012, Prague, Czech Republic
Information: www.epa-congress.org

12th International Stockholm/Springfield Symposium on Advances in Alzheimer Therapy
9-12 May 2012, Stockholm, Sweden
Information: www.siumed.edu/cme/alzheimer
## Calendar of ECNP Meetings

### Congresses

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### Workshops

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<td>7-10 March 2013</td>
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### Consultation Meetings

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### Schools

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For regular updates on ECNP initiatives please visit
- www.ecnp.eu
- www.ecnp-congress.eu

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### Passed away

ECNP deeply regrets the passing away of Prof. Dr. Herman G.M. Westenberg, The Netherlands, one of the founder members of the ECNP Advisory Board of National Societies.
ECNP Matters is a publication of the European College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ECNP).

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Call for copy
Deadline next issue: 19 September 2011
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ECNP Office at secretariat@ecnp.eu

Please inform the ECNP Office at secretariat@ecnp.eu if you have news on the passing away of ECNP members.

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This newsletter is printed on paper from sustainable forests.
During this 3-day workshop on neuropsychopharmacology in Nice, France, young scientists* from Europe are brought together with research leaders to discuss the latest advances and perspectives on specific topics. The ECNP Workshop aims to stimulate high-quality experimental and clinical research in mental disorders and their treatments.

**The three recurring main topics are:**
- Molecular neuropsychopharmacology
- Behavioural pharmacology
- Clinical neuropsychopharmacology

**This year’s variable topic is:**
- Depression: towards new drug targets

*Young scientists are:
• PhD students
• Post-docs*
• Residents**

*within first four years of employment after having received their PhD
**MD’s in research training within first five years after becoming MD

Participants will be selected by a scientific review committee on the basis of the quality of their submitted paper.

ECNP will subsidise the travel and accommodation costs of the approximately 100 young scientists selected to participate in this workshop.

Do you fit the definition of a young scientist? Please visit our website (www.ecnp.eu) for the full conditions of participation, including instructions on how to submit your paper.

**Deadlines:**
- Submission of papers: 1 November 2011
- E-mail of acceptance to selected young scientists: 10 January 2012
- Registration (only for selected young scientists): 17 January 2012
- Confirmation of registration & hotel reservation: soon after 17 January 2012

**Do not miss this outstanding opportunity and submit your work before 1 November 2011!**