Preprint on highlights in Istanbul 2009

Sven Ove O gren, Sweden
Chair, Scientific Programme Committee

As chairman of the Scientific Programme Committee (SPC), I have the pleasure to briefly give my impression on the scientific programme at the 22nd ECNP Congress in Istanbul. The mission of the annual ECNP Congress is to present the latest developments in the field of neuropsychopharmacology and related areas spanning from molecular mechanisms to clinical applications. It is also essential that the programme stimulates dialogue between researchers and clinicians in different fields of research. To implement this aspect the programme emphasizes educational and translational issues with the aim to facilitate the interchange of ideas and information between different disciplines. Our vision of enhancing communication between participants will make it possible for individual researchers to stay abreast on novel developments in neuropsychopharmacology and be given the tools necessary for a critical evaluation of new developments in related fields of research.

The challenges of the scientific programme can only be met by a good team work involving many engaged and creative people. In addition, the SPC has been blessed by a large number of full symposia proposals from members and non-members representing more than twenty countries. Thus, the scientific programme is the result of contributions of many people. I would like to thank everybody who has assisted in the creation of this year’s programme. A special thanks goes to the ECNP Office and particularly Maria Vrijmoed-de Vries.

The ECNP Congress has a special symposium, one in the pre-clinical and one in the interface track that will provide the opportunity for young scientists to present their work and results to a broader audience. The Young Scientists Award symposium (previously called the Young Scientists in Europe, March, Nice, France, which takes place in early March each year.

To give the opportunity for presentation of truly novel and ground-breaking work, the Breaking News symposia were created a couple of years ago. To include the latest developments in the field, the topics are selected less than a month before the start of the ECNP Congress. The challenge of the Breaking News has attracted a large attendance in the meeting rooms. Unfortunately, the content of the symposia can not be printed in the final programme nor are the related papers published on the ECNP Congress website www.ecnp.eu. However, the selected speakers will be asked to make their applications available to you as hand outs and as publications on the Congress Information System and the ECNP website www.ecnp.eu. One can still apply for a lecture in one of these Breaking News symposia via the ECNP website www.ecnp.eu.

As always I would like to single out the three plenary lectures as particularly interesting. The lecture by Jean-Pol Tassin, winner of the 2009 ECNP Neuropsychopharmacology Award in Preclinical Research, deals with the role of novel mechanisms of neurotransmitter interactions for addiction. Gunter Schumann will analyze the neurobiological basis for addictive behaviour from a genetic perspective, and William T. Carpenter, former President of the ACNP analyses the schizophrenia paradigm from a perspective of 100 years.

The scientific programme highlights the sophisticated and broad range of activities within European neuropsychopharmacology. There is something for everyone and it is often difficult to select a particular symposium. Since I am not a clinician, I try to attend sessions which deal with novel developments in clinical treatment such as S.03 and S.21. These symposia give an update on the somewhat controversial treatment options in bipolar disorders and analyse the complicated use of antipsychotics in children and adolescents in psychotic and non-psychotic disorders, respectively. Exciting new findings on the potential role of virus infections for development of schizophrenia are discussed in S.05. In S.06 the impact of the multiple genetic variations for adult ADHD is discussed. Both S.08, S.12 and S.18 feature mechanism for brain plasticity and memory with focus on the activity related protein Arc, novel possibilities for memory improvements and the role of the histamine H3 receptor respectively. This research is highly relevant since a number of neuropsychiatric disorders are characterized by changes in neuronal plasticity in areas of the brain associated with cognition. S.10 brings up new perspectives on the role of the somatostatinergic mesolimbic dopaminergic receptor in depression. S.15 focuses on how the brain interacts with the heart and how autonomic dysregulations in stress and mood-related disorders can affect cardiac function. S.16 has a strong translational approach analysing genetic and non-genetic mechanisms underlying schizophrenia in rodent models. S.20 gives an in-depth analysis of the significance of neurotransmitters such as BDNF for treatment of mood disorders. S.28 gives new perspectives on the critical role of serotonin during neurodevelopment and how the prenatal balance of serotonin can affect the behavioural phenotype in the adult that is of importance for development of depression and anxiety.

In addition to the traditional symposia, special sessions will feature educational updates, which have turned out to be highly appreciated by the attenders of the congress. These sessions focus on training and they provide the opportunity to fresh up old knowledge, to review new developments in the field and to discuss guidelines in clinical practice. E.01 GABA in neuropsychopharmacotherapy; E.02 Biomarkers in experimental medicine in developing new treatments in neuropsychopharmacology, a report on the ECNP Consultation Meeting in 2009; E.03 Tailoring insomnia therapy to patient phenotypes; E.04 Treatment guidelines for bipolar disorder updated; E.05 Molecular genetics and its impact on understanding and treatment of schizophrenia and E.06 The ICD-11 and DSM-5 in preparation: consequences for research and action, a session organized by the European Psychiatric Association.

In addition, a very intensive satellite symposium programme is being organized this year with 16 symposia covering a variety of topics and indications in psychiatry.

I would also like to put your attention to the poster session in which more than 800 posters are presented spread over the Sunday, Monday and Tuesday lunch hours. To visit a poster is often a great way to communicate with the researcher responsible for the presented work. The posters also give the opportunity to get very easy access to novel information which is about to be published.

Finally, the brainstorming sessions, proposed by you ECNP members, are as the name implies a forum for discussions on controversial issues in the field of neuropsychopharmacology. The format of these sessions is interesting: the proposer and a second expert will initiate the discussion, which is then followed by inputs from the audience. The SPC has appointed chairs, members from the ECNP Scientific Advisory Panels, to streamline the discussions. This format can open up for a very interesting dialogue on issues of common interest for the participants.

The 22nd ECNP Congress takes place in Istanbul, which is an ancient meeting place between people from Europe and Asia throughout history. The town has a fascinating history and it has always been a cross road between cultures which is reflected in its outstanding architecture, its varied cultural life and its cuisine. In addition to an exciting scientific programme, the ECNP Congress in Istanbul offers an exceptionally stimulating meeting place.

In short: I am looking forward to see you at the 22nd ECNP Congress!
It happened again. First week of March, and the ECNP Workshop gathered a bunch of top senior scientists and about a hundred young ‘beautiful minds’ to share new research data and experience in an informal, highly interactive and intensive meeting, that came up to be a success according to the feedback of the attendees.

ECNP sponsored travel and accommodation expenses to young scientists in the field of neuropsychopharmacology and related areas, and the payback was lively poster sessions and excellent oral presentations, some of which have been selected for presentation at the forthcoming ECNP Congress in Istanbul. The attenders also had the opportunity to listen to and interact with senior scientists in the fields of molecular, behavioural, and clinical neuropsychopharmacology. The special topic this time was ‘addiction’ and this was consistent with the addictive nature of the high-quality, multidisciplinary and international exchange of ideas that I was privileged to witness as meeting chair. Next year we shall come back again with the same successful format and the special topic will be ‘bipolar disorder’. We are all hypo-mania-lyically looking forward to the 2010 ECNP Workshop for Young Scientists in Neuropsychopharmacology!

Input from participants

A number of participants from the ECNP Workshop who presented a short lecture in addition to a poster have been asked to answer the following:

We would like to learn more about:

- your education background
- your present study subject(s)
- your experience presenting for an audience of peers and senior experts
- your future plans/goals

Magdalena Gaska, Poland

P.1.13 Time-dependent alterations in gene expression in rat brain after administration of antidepressants - a gene microarray, RT-PCR study

I have studied biotechnology at the Jagiellonian University (specialisation biochemistry). Now, I am working on my PhD thesis in the Department of Pharmacology in Polish Academy of Sciences in Krakow under the supervision of Prof. Marta Dziedzicka-Wasylewska. The idea of my study derives from the clinical observation that onset of action of antidepressants usually takes weeks, but no one knows what happens during the time necessary for antidepressants to work. The aim of my study was to recognize changes in the transcription of selected genes that are regulated by antidepressants in specific brain regions, e.g., encoding receptors, transcription factors, genes involved in inflammatory responses, neuronal apoptosis, and synaptic plasticity, as well as some other genes hitherto unlinked directly to antidepressant action. Additionally, it was decided to check whether a single dose of drug followed by a drug-free period induces changes similar to those observed after chronic antidepressants. Structure-specific and time-dependent changes in gene expression level give a tremendous potential for further understanding of antidepressant action, especially since the methodology employed to detect them was very subtle: laser micro-dissection of tissue and RT-PCR arrays.

This was the first time that I participated in the ECNP Workshop. It was a great pleasure and equally an honour to attend it, especially as I had the opportunity to present my own results in front of an audience. It was a challenging experience for me, but I was positively surprised by the interest and amount of questions from my peers and senior experts as well. The individual discussions continued during the lunchtime and the poster session. Although my presentation and poster presented only a small part and preliminary analysis of my work, attending the ECNP Workshop was a good opportunity to exchange ideas and I certainly will follow some useful advices of prominent scientists for improvement of my results. Furthermore, the friendly atmosphere, the very interesting topics of presentations and the spirit of healthy scientific competition additionally enthused me about science and triggered my ‘desire for knowledge’.

Although the experimental work is already finished, with invaluable help and advice of the whole team in our laboratory, the most difficult step in my studies is data analysis, while data processing can influence or even change the final results. I plan to conduct further bioinformatic analyses and biostatistical analyses which would be essential to properly interpret the biological significance of an experiment. Meanwhile I hope to broaden my knowledge on other fields of neuroscience.

Andreas Hahn, Austria

P.1.16 Serotonin-1B receptor binding potential in dorsal raphe nucleus predicts orbitofrontal reactivity in healthy subjects

I studied Biomedical Engineering Sciences at the University of Applied Sciences ‘Technikum Wien’ in Vienna, Austria (2003-2008). Within my master’s thesis I came to the Functional Neuroimaging Group - PET & fMRI, Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Medical University of Vienna, Austria, where I am currently performing my PhD-studies. The Functional Neuroimaging Group has its focus on the investigation of the serotonergic neurotransmitter system with PET (18F raclopride and transporters) as well as assessing the neuronal activation both in healthy subjects and in patients with psychiatric disorders. I started combining multimodal neuroimaging data during my master’s thesis using PET and functional fMRI. After evaluating the results of healthy subjects we were interested in these multimodal relationships within anxiety disorder patients and of course the difference between the two populations.

Considering that this was my very first meeting, I was quite excited. However, it was a great experience to give a talk and answer questions to an expert audience. Finally, everything went fine so I really appreciated the opportunity to present my data.

In the near future I will write my manuscript, I hope to make some progress within my PhD-studies on the quantification of PET data, and the ECNP Congress in Istanbul!

Briana Halbhuber, Germany

P.4.04 Specific deletion of AMPAR GluR1 subunits in D2 expressing neurons: depression-coordination related behavioural consequences

As I studied for my bachelor’s degree in biology at the University Joseph Fourier in Grenoble, France, I developed a strong interest for neuroscience. I later received a Master’s degree in Neuropsychopharmacology from the University Victor Segalen in Bordeaux, which gave me the opportunity to gain a first experience in preclinical research in the department of Psychopharmacology of GlavosmithKlinke in Italy. I have now a PhD fellowship at the Central Institute of Mental Health in Mannheim, Germany, where I undertake my research in the Department of Psychopharmacology headed by Prof. Rainer Spanagel.

This study is part of a multi-disciplinary project on the role of synaptic plasticity in drug addiction. We participate to this project in collaboration with the lab of Prof. Schütz from the German Cancer Research Centre in Heidelberg and the lab of Prof. Lüscher in Geneva. An important objective of my PhD has been to set up the model of cocaine self-administration in mice. I have been given the unique opportunity to test, in this model, mice bearing a conditional knockout of glutamate receptors in the mesolimbic pathway.

I was somewhat intimidated to present my results in front of young scientists like me and in front of expert scientists; nevertheless it was a wonderful experience! During the presentation, it was very rewarding to share my excitement about newly obtained results with the audience and to receive much positive feedback. In parallel, the discussions the presentation of my poster initiated have been very constructive and will certainly be helpful for the design of future study.

I am now focused on completing my PhD study. The different techniques that are made available by our collaborations offer many exciting research possibilities. I would be keen to explore some of them and this is probably work that will take me beyond the scope of my PhD thesis.

Amy Milton, United Kingdom

P.4.09 NMDA receptors and beta-adrenergic receptors as molecular targets for the prevention of relapse to drug-seeking

I obtained my masters degree in Natural Sciences (Biological) specialising in Neuroscience, at the Newnham College in 2004. Next, I joined Prof. Everitt’s lab as a graduate student and I completed my PhD, entitled ‘Neuropsychopharmacological mechanisms underlying memory reconsolidation: implications for the treatment of neuropsychiatric disorders’ in 2007. Since then I have remained in Prof. Everitt’s lab, first as a postdoc and Research Fellow at Downing College, Cambridge, and at present as a Departmental Lecturer.

I have always been interested in memory and compulsion, so my PhD thesis focused upon the ways in which memories contribute to apparently compulsive behaviour in the neuropsychiatric disorders of drug addiction, obesity and PTSD. During my PhD I was fortunate enough to work not only with Prof. Everitt, but also with Dr Joff Lee, a prominent researcher in the field of memory reconsolidation. His work had focused largely upon the necessity of the plasticity-related immediate early gene zif268 in the reconsolidation of conditioned stimulus (CS) fear and CS-drug memories. My work has developed to be complementary to Dr Lee’s, focusing upon the neurochemical mechanisms that underlie the reconsolidation process.

It was a wonderful opportunity, and I would like to thank the organisers again for giving me the chance to present my work.

I am continuing with the memory reconsolidation work, investigating whether the CS-drug memories that occurred in Prof. Lee’s laboratory in a model of Bandolier transfer can be disrupted at retrieval. I also have an ongoing experiment investigating whether the reconsolidation of habit memories can be disrupted, and another experiment determining the necessity of glutamatergic signalling in the destabilisation of memory.
Impressions from the 2009 ECNP Workshop

Continued from page 2.

Kamilla Miskowiak, Denmark

P3.11 Erythropoietin modulates emotional processing in biomarker models of antidepressant drug action in depressed patients

2009: Postdoc research psychologist, Department of Psychiatry, University Hospital of Copenhagen, Rigshospitalet
2005-08: DPhil, Departments of Experimental Psychology and Psychiatry, University of Oxford.
2005: Clinical Degree in Psychology, Department of Psychology, University of Copenhagen.
2003-04: Master's degree, Department of Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford
2000-03: Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology, University of Copenhagen.

As an undergraduate at the University of Copenhagen I was interested in the neurotropic and neuroprotective effects of erythropoietin (Epo) and I set out to investigate whether Epo administration would aid recovery after brain damage. I collaborated with Prof. Jesper Mogensen at the Unit of Cognitive Neuroscience to investigate this hypothesis in a rodent model. Our results revealed that Epo improves functional recovery, highlighting Epo as a potentially important therapeutic agent in the treatment of human CNS damage. Interestingly, Epo also influenced search patterns in sham-operated rats in a way suggesting that Epo modulated cognitive – or perhaps emotional – function in normal non-brain damaged animals.

During my MSc and based on my previous work, I developed the idea together with Dr Catherine Harmer that Epo could be a new antidepressant based on evidence that neuroplasticity might play a key role in the pathophysiology and drug treatment of depression. This idea led to my PhD at University of Oxford, during which I explored the effects of Epo in human biomarker models of antidepressant drug action using pharmacological fMRI.

My research revealed that Epo modulates neural and cognitive processing of emotional information in healthy volunteers and depressed patients in ways similar to effects seen with conventional antidepressants, thereby highlighting Epo as a new candidate compound for treatment of depression.

It has been a great experience to present my data at the ECNP Workshop, firstly because my peers and senior experts were asking genuinely interested questions at the talk and, secondly, because the environment was very friendly and safe, given the size of the workshop and the social networking activities.

I am currently working as a post-doc research psychologist at the Department of Psychiatry, Copenhagen University Hospital Rigshospitalet in Denmark. I am in the process of setting up a clinical trial to test the effects of Epo treatment in patients with depression.

Kieran Rea, Ireland

P2.20 The role of GABA on rat basolateral amygdala and periaqueductal grey on the behavioural expression of fear and pain

My background is in biochemistry (Hons. BSc.) with a masters degree and PhD in neuropharmacology.

Briefly, the method of my research consists of the combination of classical Pavlovian fear-conditioning with the formalin test. It has previously been shown that fear-conditioning suppresses the expression of formalin-evoked nociceptive behaviour. This is known as ‘fear-conditioned analgesia’. Using microdialysis coupled to HPLC, we investigated the role of GABA in this phenomenon in parallel with assessing behaviour, and further provided a role for GABA in the expression of these behaviours by manipulating GABAergic tone.

I thoroughly enjoyed presenting and found it an exhilarating experience. I found the audience very enthusiastic, and as my topic was a little different (pain), there were a number of interesting questions.

The bringing together of young scientists is an excellent way to promote collaborative projects and to generate ideas for future studies. I found the ECNP Workshop extremely interesting and I was intrigued by the progress in many of the neuropharmaceutical fields. The real time effects of drug-receptor binding, knockout studies, the integration of the different neurological circuits, as well as understanding their effects on various behaviours including addiction were all expertly addressed. It was great to receive input from clinical as well as preclinical researchers, and to understand drug studies performed in humans. I also found the topic of genetic-environment interactions and the use of gene microarrays particularly interesting and the conference finished well with a section on novel targets for drug addiction and molecular approaches to future treatments.

The poster sessions were also of a high calibre and allowed people to interact more directly and to understand different methodological aspects of the studies, as well as impart and receive advice and ideas about further work. So there were plenty of scientific ideas to discuss, and I received a lot of useful advice not only for myself, but also for work my colleagues are performing in the lab at the National University of Ireland, Galway.

I found the workshop to be very beneficial and informative, and thoroughly enjoyed the eagerness and interest and general ‘buzz’ around the oral and poster presentations. I will most certainly be recommending my colleagues to attend this workshop.

Finally, I would like to thank ECNP for allowing me the opportunity to attend the workshop and to congratulate them on a job well done!

I am currently working as a post-doctoral researcher in the area of pain at the Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics, NCBBES Neuroscience Cluster and Centre for Pain Research at the National University of Ireland in Galway.

Linda Scrivello, United Kingdom

P3.17 The effects of modafinil on cognitive and emotional functions in the first episode of psychosis

I have a rather atypical curriculum. I started my studies in medicine, as I have always been interested in life and its mysteries, and had already a vague idea that I wanted to be involved in research. However, I noticed that this course wasn’t particularly focused on research, so I switched to a biology degree and specialised in applied genetics. Genetics was a fantastic topic, but I felt that it was used more as a tool than an aim; thus I decided to do a Masters degree in cognitive and behavioural neuroscience, which would allow me to use my expertise in genetics, combining it with my interests in human functioning. Finally, this led me to a PhD in psychiatry, in which I study neuropsychological and microbiological aspects of psychosis, and the interaction between the two. I also familiarised myself with pharmacology and found this was a fantastic way of analysing what is happening at the microbiological level and understanding causality in the neuropsychological aspect of the disease.

My PhD focuses on targeting and improving cognitive and emotional impairments in psychosis. Modafinil is a drug that had previously been tested in the department in which I work. It was found to improve cognitive functions in healthy volunteers (Mulder et al. 2004), in ADHD patients (Turner et al. 2003) and in people with chronic schizophrenia (Turner et al. 2004). From this last study, we hypothesised modafinil would also improve cognitive symptoms in early psychosis, a time when these symptoms are less severe than in chronic schizophrenia. And, as I was also interested in emotional impairments in psychosis, I introduced tests to see whether modafinil could also improve emotional functions, which it did indeed!

This was the first time I presented my work in front of such a big audience. I felt quite nervous at the beginning, but mostly excited. It was really enjoyable to share my work with others and receive feedback and comments about it. It was also a great experience to be able to present my work, as it prepared me for future meetings and gave me more self-confidence.

Overall it was a real pleasure to do it and I send my thanks to all the organisers of the ECNP Workshop for making this happen.

This study is not totally finished yet, as we still have some more patients to recruit and data to analyse, so I will be focusing on that in the next few months. From a long-term perspective, I intend to carry out some research on what seems to be the active component of modafinil: its transmaminor enantiomer. This might lead us to larger results and thus better ways of treating cognitive and emotional impairments in psychosis.
Interview with Bill Wisden, United Kingdom, at the ECNP Workshop on Neuropsychopharmacology for Young Scientists in Europe, 5 - 8 March 2009, Nice, France

In Nice, Bill Wisden, PhD was invited to address the theme ‘Engineering receptor subtypes as tools in neuropsychopharmacology’ at the session on Molecular Neuropsychopharmacology.

Bill Wisden is full professor and Chair in Molecular Neuroscience and from February 2009 endowed Head of Cell Biology & Functional Genomics Section at the Imperial College in London. Before this post, Bill Wisden has been Professor and Chair of Neuroscience, Head of Neurobiology programme, at the Institute of Medical Science, University of Aberdeen for four years.

Bill Wisden is author of 119 publications: 76 peer-reviewed original research articles, 12 special review articles, 26 other book articles, edited one methods book (1st & 2nd editions) and one textbook. Bill Wisden is listed as a Thomson ISI ‘highly-cited researcher’.

Bill Wisden is member of the Editorial Board of Neuroscience and Frontiers of Molecular Neurosciences. He is currently on the Advisory Board of the Spemann Graduate School of Biology and Medicine at the University of Freiberg and is a member of the expert referee panel of the Alzheimer’s Research Trust.

The title of your lecture is ‘Engineering receptor subtypes as tools in neuropsychopharmacology’. Without repeating your lecture, what is the main goal for this type of research?

The work I was involved in at Aberdeen and the research at Imperial College London at the Cell Biology & Functional Genomics section involves basic research to obtain knowledge on how the brain works. In particular, we have been developing genetic techniques, using modified GABA-A receptors (see picture 1), to turn the activity of neurons up and down selectively (please see: Wulff P et al Nat Neuroscience 10: 923). The first type of neuron we targeted in this way was the cerebellar Purkinje cells (see picture 2), which shows the Purkinje cells expressing a GFP-tagged GABA-A receptor subunit transgene in mice. By using this method, we can come to understand how particular types of neurons in any given circuit influence, for example, memory formation or other types of behaviour. To develop targeted treatments for the cognitive defects that occur for example in schizophrenia, will require greater knowledge of the circuits that govern working memory, i.e. the ability to keep events ‘in mind’ for short time periods. In spite of our increasing knowledge about the ‘wiring diagram’ of the hippocampus and neocortex, little is known about the specific contributions that the diverse interneurone types make to behaviour. We are using novel genetic techniques to selectively and reversibly inhibit these interneurones and we are studying how this effects working memory formation.

Do these studies include translational aspects?

All of my work is funded currently by the UK government (Medical Research Council) in anticipation that learning about the basic mechanisms of brain function will provide a platform for other discoveries that directly impact on the clinical situation. But it is a long way from there to clinical applications of the results. However, I am engaged in a couple of collaborations with (more) clinically oriented groups. One example is the research on hypothalamic function, the regulation of neurons which make histamine and the tubero-mammillary nucleus and sleep regulation within the area of research on sleep pathways and general anaesthesia.

Another project for which I would like to contribute to is ‘where in the brain do benzodiazepines work?’. In particular, we are interested in which circuits benzodiazepines induce their hypnotic actions or anxiolytic-reducing actions.

What do you think about the concept of the Workshop?

I like the set-up of the ECNP Workshop very much. The coverage of a wide range of topics in neuropsychopharmacology is very good. To be more involved in ECNP activities is certainly part of my future plans.


The second European Brain Policy Forum (EBPF), 25 - 26 February 2009, Brussels, Belgium, took depression as its theme. It was ably chaired by former TV journalist Martyn Lewis, and well-attended by patients, industry spokespeople, basic scientists and clinicians, though policymakers were under-represented.

In an opening lecture, Hans-Ulrich Wittchen* from Germany presented some startling statistics. Nine per cent of the EU population aged between 18 and 65 suffers from depression, with a female/male ratio of 2:1. Women who marry and have children double their risk of depression, unless they return to work. For employers, who along with social services bear the majority of the burden of the disease, every Euro invested in the support of depressed employees brings a six fold return in terms of regained productivity.

One important theme to emerge from the forum was that the indirect costs of depression - mainly due to absenteeism - far outweigh the direct costs (mainly healthcare costs), yet when considering the cost-effectiveness of therapies, regulatory authorities tend to focus only on the latter. Another was that treatment efforts have largely been focused on alleviating the acute phase in the acute phase of illness, there would be more usefully targeted to preventing recurrence.

A third was that more research is needed on depression in children, adolescents and the elderly.

The developmental neurobiologist Alain Prochaintz from France presented the case for the relevance of basic science to patients, the Dutch psychiatrist Herman van Praag argued that depression was a disease of both the soul and the brain, and Mary Baker, EBC Vice-President and President of the European Federation of Neurological Associations, made a plea to clinicians and basic scientists to enter into dialogue with patients and the media.

At a dinner for delegates held at the former Savoy laboratories in Brussels, Philippe Buquin, Member of the European Parliament, accepted honorary membership of the EBC from President Julien Mendelssohn**, in recognition of his tireless support of the organisation and its goals.

* editorial note: secretary ECNP Executive Committee

** editorial note: past-president of ECNP
Call for nominations:
- ECNP Neuropsychopharmacology Award 2010 in Clinical Research
- ECNP Lifetime Achievement Award 2010

ECNP Research Grant for Young Scientists

2009: winners
For the second year, ECNP members have been given the opportunity to support applications for the ECNP Research Grant by young European scientists. The ECNP Award Committee has granted the following two persons with the award:

- Silvia Alboni from the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Modena, Italy who will visit the Stress, Psychiatry and Immunology Laboratory at King’s College, London, United Kingdom
- Alessandro Colasanti from the Maastricht University, Department of Psychiatry and Neurophysiology, Experimental Psychiatry, Maastricht, The Netherlands who will visit the Department of Neuropsychopharmacology and Molecular Imaging, Imperial College, London, United Kingdom

2010: call for applications
Applications can be submitted between 15 June 2009 and 15 January 2010. For further information please visit the ECNP website www.ecnp.eu.

ECNP support of symposia at meetings of members of the ECNP Advisory Board of National Societies
Joseph Zohar, Israel
Chair Educational Committee

Since 2006, the ECNP has offered financial support for educational symposia at national meetings of its member societies. This type of symposia is intended to provide the audience with the specific expertise of a broad approach to neuropsychopharmacology. By this the symposia serve a way to highlight the specific activity of ECNP on one hand, whilst on the other hand broadly updating the meeting attendees of cutting-edge knowledge in neuropsychopharmacology in a balanced fashion.

Previous symposia supported by ECNP include ‘Off label use of drugs in psychiatry’, held in Italy in June 2006, ‘Dopaminergic side of OCD’ held in March 2007 in Israel, ‘Psychiatry among medical sciences’ held in Poland in June 2007, and ‘Do principles of EBM apply to psychiatry as they apply to the rest of the medical specialties?’ held in Romania in October 2008. On the latter symposium you will find a report in this issue of ECNP Matters. In all symposia, ECNP international speakers joined local speakers for the symposium, which was enthusiastically received, both by the local organizers and the meeting attendees.

Plans are underway to support similar symposia in Germany (Munich), and in Bulgaria (Ruse), both in October 2009. Of course, future applications are always welcome; details on how to apply for support are available on the ECNP website www.ecnp.eu.

Report on the ECNP Symposium at the 3rd National Congress of the Romanian Psychiatric Association (APR)

The European College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ECNP) supported a symposium at the 3rd National Congress of the Romanian Psychiatric Association (APR) at the Palace of the Parliament held from 1 - 4 October 2008, Bucharest, Romania.

The symposium took place on the last day of the congress, before the Closing Session, on Saturday, 4 October, between 11.30 – 13.30 hours. Originally, the program of the symposium included three speakers, Prof. Michael Davidson, Prof. Joseph Zohar and Prof. Carlo Altamura. Unfortunately, at the last moment Prof. Carlo Altamura was not able to attend. The chairman of the symposium was Prof. Dan Prepeluzanu, president of APR and president of the congress.

The first presentation by Michael Davidson, entitled ‘Strengths and weakness of evidence – based medicine (EBM) in general and its particular role in psychiatry’ approached in a critical and interrogative way the relevance of EBM for psychiatry.

Michael Davidson stressed the idea that scientific evidence should constitute the only foundation for medical practice. This idea has withstand the test of time and the principal stakeholders of clinical practice consumers, practitioners, and providers of services and products - are all trying to influence the stream of evidence. The current debate on EBM focuses on what constitutes true scientific evidence, and how best to translate this evidence into clinical practice.

A number of pragmatic trials have been conducted in schizophrenia and in affective disorders in the last few years however they did not add much clarity to the field nor did they affect prescribing practice in a meaningful manner. A number of hypotheses have been raised to explain this apparent paradox. It has been suggested that no matter how impeccable the real design is conducted its effect on established clinical practice is limited because of the large biological heterogeneity inherent in the psychiatric classification. Michael Davidson, Prof. Joseph Zohar and Prof. Carlo Altamura on the other hand focused on some of the dilemmas related to translating clinical trial evidence into clinical practice.

The second presentation, entitled ‘Endophenotype and OCD – impact on diagnosis and Treatment’ by Joseph Zohar approached by conceptual and practical dimensions the clinical problem of OCD and anxiety-related problems.

Joseph Zohar underlined the current trend to rely more on biological markers, i.e. on measures that might have higher validity as diagnostic tools in OCD matters. The direction is to go beneath the surface, to look beyond the symptoms, to try to identify endophenotypes. Endophenotypes might be studied via cognitive tests, pharmacological challenges, brain imaging, genetics, familiar aggregation, etc. One possible approach based on these strategies is to introduce dimensional components into future diagnostic systems. Hence the dimensional approach would be considered an integral part of the diagnostic procedure. In the talk the idea of alternative diagnostic tools, adapting dimension as well as endophenotype, how to use it as a potential scheme for improving diagnosis and eventually treatment in OCD was discussed.

After the lecture, Prof Tudor Udriște, former President of APR, and two young Romanian psychiatrists debated with Michael Davidson and Joseph Zohar on the aspect of missing scientific studies on epidemiological data of different mental disorders in Romania.

At the end of the symposium, the chairman thanked the speakers as representatives of ECNP and the audience for their active participation.

ECNP Matters
ECNP Congresses

12 - 16 September 2009
22nd ECNP Congress, Istanbul, Turkey
28 August - 1 September 2010
23rd ECNP Congress, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
3 - 7 September 2011
24th ECNP Congress, Paris, France
13 - 17 October 2012
25th ECNP Congress, Vienna, Austria
5 - 9 October 2013
26th ECNP Congress, Barcelona, Spain

For further information:

Scientific secretariat
ECNP-Office
PO. Box 85410
3508 AK Utrecht
The Netherlands

Organising secretariat
22nd ECNP Congress
Colloquium Brussels
6, Avenue E. Van Neuwenhuyse
1160 Brussels
Belgium

phone: +31 30 253 8567
phone: +32 2 777 0188
fax: +32 2 779 5960

E-mail: secretariat@ecnp.eu
E-mail: organisingsecretariat@ecnp2009.eu
Website: www.ecnp.eu

ECNP School of Neuropsychopharmacology

5 - 10 July 2009, Oxford, United Kingdom
E-mail: secretariat@ecnp.eu

ECNP Workshop on Neuropsychopharmacology for Young Scientists in Europe

Variable topics:
- Molecular neuropsychopharmacology
- Behavioural pharmacology
- Clinical neuropsychopharmacology

3 - 6 March 2010, Nice, France

ECNP Consultation Meeting

7 - 9 March 2010, Nice, France
6 - 8 March 2011, Nice, France

For further information:

Website: www.ecnp.eu
E-mail: nic2010@ecnp.eu

ECNP Office
PO. Box 85410
3508 AK Utrecht
The Netherlands

Phone: +31 30 253 8567
Fax: +31 30 253 8568

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Edited by
Marie-Virginie de Vries, The Netherlands, editor
Jan M. van Ree, The Netherlands, editor

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Kamilla Miskowiak, Denmark
Jorgen Oves Olesen, Sweden
Kiran Ratna, Ireland
Linda Scoriels, United Kingdom
Per van Reuten, The Netherlands
Eduard Vieria, Spain
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Bill Wruksa, United Kingdom
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Meeting national societies

Austrian Society for Neuropsychopharmacology and Biological Psychiatry
11th Annual Meeting
19 - 20 November 2009, Vienna, Austria
Information: www.agnp.de

British Association for Psychopharmacology
2009 Summer Meeting
26 - 29 July 2009, Oxford, United Kingdom
Information: www.bap.org.uk/summermeetings/home.php/meetingID=2

German Association of Neuropsychopharmacology and Pharmacopsychiatry
26th Symposium
7 - 10 October 2009, Münster, Germany
Information: www.agp.de

Spanish Society of Psychiatry
XIII Spanish Congress of Psychiatry
19 - 24 October 2009, Madrid, Spain
Information: www.psiquiamadrid2009.org

Meetings related organisations

7th FENS Forum of European Neuroscience
3 - 7 July 2010, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Information: forum.fens.org/2010

16th World Congress on Basic and Clinical Pharmacology
17 - 23 July 2010, Copenhagen, Denmark
Information: www.worldpharma2010.org