

Meeting report - 6th European Workshop on Cannabinoid Research

The 6th European Workshop on Cannabinoid Research took place at Trinity College Dublin from Thursday 18th to Saturday 20th April 2013. The conference was organised by the British Pharmacological Society (BPS) together with Irish cannabinoid researchers and was the largest and most high profile scientific conference on cannabis and cannabinoids ever held in Ireland. The local organising committee comprised Irish cannabinoid researchers from NUI Galway (Dr. David Finn and Dr. Michelle Roche), University College Cork (Dr. Eric Downer), Trinity College Dublin (Dr. Veronica Campbell, Dr. Áine Kelly and Dr. Aoife Gowran) and University College Dublin (Dr. Caroline Herron).

This conference is the leading forum in Europe for the presentation and discussion of novel findings in the area of cannabis and cannabinoid research. Cannabinoids are the biologically active constituents of the cannabis plant or synthetic drugs with similar effects. Cannabinoids bind to receptors throughout the body to exert their effects which can be wide-ranging. Indeed, the body itself produces its own cannabinoids, so-called endocannabinoids, which are now understood to play very important roles in health and disease processes. In recent years there has been considerable interest in the area of cannabis and cannabinoids for the treatment of a number of conditions including multiple sclerosis, chronic pain, psychiatric disorders, obesity and others.

The meeting featured a very lively and high calibre scientific programme with many of the world's leading scientists in this area speaking. A key goal of the meeting was to attract young researchers as it represented a valuable forum for early career research students and postdoctoral researchers to present their work in oral or poster form, with a number of prizes and awards conferred during the meeting. In addition, there were two keynote lectures. The first was delivered by Professor Aron Lichtman of Virginia Commonwealth University, USA and was entitled 'Harnessing the endogenous cannabinoid system to treat pain'. The second keynote lecture was entitled 'The road ahead for endocannabinoid research' and was delivered by Professor Raphael Mechoulam of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. Professor Mechoulam is regarded by many as the founding father of modern scientific research into cannabinoids, having identified delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol as the main psychoactive constituent within the cannabis plant in the mid 20th century.

Over the 3-day conference 34 oral presentations took place in 7 sessions:

Session I – Novel receptor targets and mechanisms

Session II – Neuroinflammation

Session III – Pain

Session IV – Brain Function

Session V – Cardiovascular

Session VI - Cell Fate

Session VII – Hot topics from the lab and the clinic

Sixteen of the World's leading cannabinoid researchers gave invited presentations. In addition, there were 63 posters presented at the meeting.

An enjoyable social programme included a welcome reception in Trinity College Dublin's Long Room with Book of Kells viewing, Conference banquet at the

Mansion House with after dinner ceilí dancing, and the opportunity to visit the Guinness Storehouse – all of which gave delegates the opportunity to interact and continue scientific discussions in an informal setting.

Overall, the conference was attended by over 150 scientists from 19 countries as follows: Austria (2), Canada (4), Finland (2), France (1), Germany (18), Hong Kong (1), Hungary (2), Ireland (26), Israel (5), Italy (5), Kuwait (1), Mexico (1), Poland (9), Slovenia (1), Spain (19), Sweden (4), Switzerland (5), Netherlands (4), UK (32), US (8). The meeting received extensive media coverage, with interviews conducted with the national RTE Television Six One news and RTE Radio One’s Mooney Show. Articles were also published in The Irish Examiner Newspaper, in addition to the NUI Galway and University College Cork websites, and an article is currently being prepared for publication in the Irish Medical News.

Use of ISN funds

We received a total of \$7500 (~£4930) from the ISN. The majority (61%) of the ISN funds were used to support the attendance and participation of students and postdocs. A list of bursary recipients and the amounts allocated to each is presented in the table below.

Allocated fellowships for attendees of the 6th European Workshop on Cannabinoid Research

Ruth	Concannon	Ireland
Khalil	Eldeeb	US
Francisco	Espejo-Porras	Spain
Carina	Kozmus	Slovenia
Eugene	Krustev	Canada
Alvaro Llorente	Llorente	Spain
Paula	Morales	Spain
Kieran	Rea	Ireland
Marie	Smith	UK
Christopher	Stanley	UK

The remaining 39% of ISN funding was used as to award two prizes for the best poster communications (each £200) and one prize for the best oral communication (£300) which were awarded to young researchers as well as towards the speaker expenses.

An Excel file showing all income and expenses associated with the conference is also appended with this report for information.

In addition, we have attached some photographs taken at the conference with captions as follows:

IMG1119: Professor Aron Lichtman of Virginia Commonwealth University, USA gives Plenary Lecture.

IMG3397: Delegates in the conference lecture theatre.

IMG3425: Delegates interacting at poster session.

IMG3540: Khalil Eldeeb receives prize for the best poster presentation from Professor Raphael Mechoulam (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) and Dr. David Finn (National University of Ireland Galway; Chair of Conference Organising Committee)

Finally, we would like to thank the ISN most sincerely for the funding awarded to support this conference. Support from the ISN had a very significant and positive impact on our ability to run the best possible conference. Full acknowledgment of ISN support was given in the conference promotion materials, website and scientific programme, as well as at the conference itself.