



09 April 2015

Professor Alessandro Prinetti

Chair of ISN-CC

Department of Medical Biotechnology and Translational Medicine

University of Milano

Italy

Report back: Society of Neuroscientists of Africa: 12th International Meeting

Dear Professor Prinetti

On behalf of the Society of Neuroscientists of Africa (SONA), the Southern African Neuroscience Society (Host Society) and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Host University), I wish to convey our sincere gratitude for the sponsorship we received from the International Society for Neurochemistry.

The 12th International SONA meeting was held in Durban South Africa (26-30 March 2015). Nineteen countries were represented; 11 from Africa viz. South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Nigeria, Egypt and Morocco. Countries represented from outside Africa were; Sweden, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Spain, United Kingdom, France and Israel. Total attendance at the meeting was 203 people.

Feedback from the meeting suggests that by all accounts, it was a successful meeting. Prior to the meeting we also hosted 4 satellite events viz.

- **Writing Workshop (22- 25 March)**

Students from across Africa who were at PhD/Postdoc level with data were invited to apply. They received help in translating their data into publications.

- **Open hardware and software for low-cost neuroscience equipment (22-25 March)**

This was to help with designing equipment that can be useful in a poorly equipped lab. The Trends in Neuroscience group, donated a 3-d printer that they had used in this workshop to the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

- A network meeting hosted by NIH/Fogarty focusing on an implementation Science Agenda: Linking Researchers, Policymakers, Programme Implementers and communities. (25 March)

Also piggybacking on SONA 2015 was the International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE), Commission of African Affairs (CAA) meeting (24-25 March)

Ten plenary sessions were organized. These comprised of 6 speakers from Europe, 1 from the United States of America and 2 from Africa. One plenary slot was reserved for a deserving IBRO Alumnus to give the James Kimani Memorial Lecture. This year the honour went to Dr Fleur Howells from the University of Cape Town in South Africa.

Plenary speakers present were in order (www.sona2015.com)

Plenary 1: Sten Grillner (Sweden) – Networks in Motion- from Ion Channels to Behaviour

Plenary 2: Ernesta Meintjies (South Africa) – Brain Imaging of Children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in South Africa

Plenary 3: Andrew Jackson (United Kingdom) – Interfacing with the brain and spinal cord to restore movement.

Plenary 4: Marina Bentivoglio (Italy) – Glia in African diseases

Plenary 5: John Joska (South Africa) – Developing Research into Cognition and Imaging in neuro-HIV in Adults in South Africa.

Plenary 6: Fleur Howells (South Africa) – James Kimani Lecture

Plenary 7: Leslie Davidson (United States of America) – The epidemiology of neurodevelopmental disability in a cohort of 1581 children in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

Plenary 8: Silvia Bisti (Italy) – Retinal function and dysfunction

Plenary 9: Debra Skene (United Kingdom) – Human circadian rhythms and sleep disorders

Plenary 10: Carlos Belmonte (Spain) – TRP channels, an early alert system for environmental challenges

There were 16 symposia and 4 workshops organized. Apart from the IBRO Alumni symposium, IBRO/ISN Neuroscience Schools in Africa alumni organized a number of the symposia. A few to name were:

1. A symposium chaired by a School alumnus with ISN members as participants.

Symposium 4: Unconventional therapeutic interventions in the treatment of Parkinson's disease.

Chairs: Thabisile Mpfana (School Alumnus, present) and Ben-Azu Benneth (alumnus, absent).

Participants included Dr. O. Ogundele (**ISN member**)

Topic: -NMDA/+VDR Pharmacological Phenotype as a Novel Therapeutic target in Relieving Motor- Cognitive Impairments in Parkinsonism

2. Symposium 5: IBRO Alumni Symposium

Participant. M Ijomome (**ISN member**)

Topic: Evaluation of hippocampal and striatal histomorphology, acetyl cholinesterase activities, and neurogenic markers following repeated administration of nicotine.

3. A symposium organized and chaired by a School alumnus and **ISN member**

Symposium 11: Neurotoxicity of environmental components: cellular and behavioural aspects.

Chairman: Samir Ahboucha

Participant: Samir Ahboucha

Topic: Lead neurotoxicity and effect on neuronal and glial systems

We also had 9 poster sessions (with 2 poster sessions a day except for the last day 30 March when we had one session).

ISN members also contributed in these:

Poster session 2: O Ijomone

Poster: Effects of nicotine administration on hippocampal and striatal acetyl cholinesterase activities, and neurogenic markers immunoreactivity.

Poster session 4: Bwenge Espoir (Absent)

Poster: A comparative study of cassava-derived cyanide toxicity and nutritional status between konzo patients and healthy patients.

Poster session 8: Musa Ajibola

Poster: Neurodegenerative potential of the aqueous leaf extract of *Ocimum gratissimum* on the prefrontal cortex. An histological and biochemical study.

All members were asked to acknowledge support from the ISN after their presentations.

Workshops organized

Workshop 1: CARMEN

Chair: Evelyne Sernagor

Workshop 2: Introduction to the teaching tool: Neurons inn Action

Chairs: Sharon Juliano and Evelyne Sernagor

Workshop 3: Women in Neuroscience

Chairs: Martha Davila-Garcia and Vivienne Russell

Workshop 4: Advocacy training, networking Neuroscience in Africa

Chairs: Musa Mabandla and Kathy Michels

ISN sponsorship

A call was sent out to travel grant applicants to identify if they were affiliated with ISN.

Below are the names of applicants who said they were members.

Name	Country	Email address	Notes
Sunday Abraham Musa	Nigeria	sundayamusa@gmail.com	Poster presentation Registration and Travel sponsorship
Yogesh Kumar Dhuriya	India	ydhuriya6@gmail.com	Did not submit an abstract, has asked for free registration
Radwa Khalil	Germany	radwakhil@hotmail.com	Granted free registration
Omba Ndjukendi	DRC	drallyndjuk2008@yahoo.fr	Poster presentation
Espoir Bwenge	DRC	esbwenge@yahoo.fr	Poster presentation – Travel and accommodation sponsorship
Inssaf Berkiks	Morocco	berkiksinsaf@gmail.com	Poster presentation - wants reduction in reg fee and travel gran
Mireille Kameni	Cameroon	my.kameni@gmail.com	Received sponsorship from IBRO
Musa Ajibola	Uganda	musaiyiola@gmail.com	Poster presentation Registration and Travel sponsorship
Tarisai Bere	Zimbabwe	tdzuda@gmail.com	No longer attending
Mamus Ijomone	Nigeria	godmamus@yahoo.com	Symposium and Poster Presenter Registration sponsorship
Olalekan Ogundele	Nigeria	ola.ogundele@abuad.edu.ng	Oral presentation, Free registration
Samir Abhoucha	Morocco	samir.ahboucha@uhp.ac.za	Symposium Chair and presenter Accommodation and travel sponsorship

Of these names only the following could provide member IDs.
These are the names in red above.

Six Young ISN Neurochemistry Awards recipients

Espoir Bwenge (15204) esbwenge@yahoo.fr
Mamus Ijomone (21256) godmamus@yahoo.com
Sunday Musa (11890) sundayamusa@gmail.com
Musa Ajibola (14280) musaiyiola@gmail.com
Samir Ahboucha (15799) samir.ahboucha@uhp.ac.za
Olalekan Ogundele (21206) ola.ogundele@abuad.edu.ng

ISN budget allocation

Amount received from ISN (\$8000) was equivalent to R 92534.64 (South African currency).
81.6% (R 75816.33) was used for the Young ISN Neurochemistry Awards.
The remaining 18.4% will be used to settle the outstanding bills such as venue hire.

Yours sincerely

Musa Vuyisile Mabandla, PhD



SONA President

Academic Leader Research
School of Laboratory Medicine and Medical Sciences
College of Health Sciences
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Private Bag X5400
Durban
4000
Email: mabandlam@ukzn.ac.za
Tel: +27 31 260 8602