International Society for Biomedical Research on Alcoholism

Volume 8, June 2018

2018-2022 Board of Directors
Newsletter

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On the Cover. **Incoming 2018 - 2022 Board of Directors** listed in alphabetical order: Ina Bergheim, Germany; Rosana Camarini, Brazil; Kenichi Ikejima, Japan; Sun-Gon Kim, South Korea; Andrew Lawrence, Australia; Richard Pautassi, Argentina; Tamara Phillips, USA; Marisa Roberto, Italy; Helmut Seitz, Germany; Rainer Spanagel, Germany; Jennifer Thomas, USA; Kaite Witkiewitz, USA.
Dear friends and members of ISBRA,

Imagine a warm summer evening in 800 AD. Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian and atheist scholars from all corners of the world sit together and engage in vibrant scientific discourse. They might be talking about optics, the economy, medicine or mathematics. Discussions become heated but remain civil, as mutual respect is of paramount importance in their host’s culture. The country in which they reside prospers economically and is peaceful internally. None of these scholars have to fear persecution or punishment for speaking their mind, as their arena of discourse is currently the most liberal place on Earth, pioneering freedom of speech, tolerance towards all religions and protection of human rights. It might be surprising to hear that this scene is set in the Arabic Abbasid Caliphate, in what is now Baghdad, Iraq.

Today Baghdad is a chaotic place and an example that our world is in disarray, mainly due to a handful of super-conservative politicians who drive excessive nationalism and forget about the rest of the world. We as scientists have to stand up to counteract these world-wide movements as science is ideally suited to connect people from different cultures and thereby foster mutual understanding.

Recently, we have launched the Science bridge initiative (www.thesciencebridge.org) to build a better world through science. So far, the initiative has received endorsements from over 200 eminent scientists from around the world, including 29 Nobel Laureates. The first goal of the initiative is to engage intercultural research collaborations for accelerating basic scientific discovery and advancing the treatment of diseases. The second aim is to improve human relations between the diverse world cultures.

An argument for why science might be successful in bringing cultures together is that modern research relies on reason and logic at its core and scientific thinking disarms factors that harm free flow of ideas, such as fundamentalism, excessive nationalism or censorship. The results of progress in science and technology are usually beneficial to the society in which they are achieved, as innovation in these areas often times translates to better health and increased prosperity. In the modern global markets, countries need strong creative forces in the science sector to remain competitive and to drive their own economic growth. Collaboration with people from different backgrounds will stimulate progress and improve everyone’s situation.

In particular, the role of international scientific societies should not be underestimated in this respect. ISBRA comprises of a small world community of alcohol researchers with the goal to understand and fight alcohol-related harm. This year we will all meet in Kyoto for our biannual meeting under the host of Dr Susumu Higushi. We should be all grateful to as he will host us in a wonderful and peaceful environment. I wish all of us and in particular our American colleagues to build as many as possible small scientific bridges to bring this world together for something better. My presidency will end by September 2018. Our society remains in healthy financial conditions, we have set up a new website, we have intensified our relationship with other societies, especially with ESBRA, and we have established a new ISBRA award to be delivered to the best scientific achievement in the alcohol research field. I will happily handover the presidency to Tamara Phillips and wish you a successful future for your research.

Rainer Spanagel, PhD, Germany
ISBRA President
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Tamara Phillips – USA
Maria Lucia Souza-Formigoni – Brazil
Welcome to ISBRA 2018 in Kyoto, Japan.

As previously announced, this year’s ISBRA World Congress will be held between 9th and 13th September in Kyoto, Japan. The deadline for symposium proposals and abstracts for poster presentation has now passed, and submissions are currently being reviewed by the local organizing committee. We will have five plenary lectures, delivered by the following: Dr. Vladimir Poznyak, Dr. Vijay Ramchandani, Prof. Jürgen Rehm, Prof. Yoshiyuki Takei, and Prof. Reinout Wiers. There will be more than 70 symposia, including those to be presented as part of the International Symposium on Alcoholic Liver and Pancreatic Diseases (ALPD) and Cirrhosis. We have also received nearly 180 abstracts for poster presentation. Of these submissions, eight came from young investigators in Asian countries. Many of the other poster abstracts were also from young investigators, from around the world. These contributions reflect the principal theme of the congress: “Global Alcohol Research - Expanding Our Knowledge, Supporting Our Members”.

As you may be aware, the International Symposium on ALPD and Cirrhosis will be included as part of the main ISBRA program, similar to the previous congress held in Berlin. However, a unique feature of this year’s congress is the inclusion of six sessions of the ISBRA-World Health Organization (WHO) workshop. The purpose of these is to build the research, clinical, and public health
competence of young professionals, especially those from less well-resourced countries. We have received 23 abstracts for this workshop, and two higher-quality abstracts will be chosen for presentation at each of five sessions (total number: 10). Together with those who have submitted abstracts, we also welcome the contribution of other participants at the workshop. We are currently developing the program and a draft will be available soon.

The congress venue is located in Kyoto, one of the most ancient and famous cities of Japan. On top of an innovative and exciting scientific congress program, you will also have the opportunity to experience first-hand, authentic Japanese culture including magnificent temples, the arts, and delicious cuisine during your stay in Kyoto.

Once again, welcome to Kyoto, the thousand-year capital of Japan.

Susumu Higuchi, MD, PhD, Japan Congress President
The 2018 ISBRA Congress in Kyoto

ESBRA 2017 Congress Review and 2019 Congress in Lille, France

Greetings from ESBRA

ESBRA had its biennial congress in 2017 in Crete, Greece with Prof. Iannis Mouzas as Congress President. The congress was localized in a beautiful environment near to the capital city of Heraklion in early October. The congress was attended very well with major topics in alcohol addiction and alcohol organ damage. Especially new developments in the pathogenesis and diagnostics of alcoholic liver disease were presented by international experts.

The European Research Award, sponsored by Dr. Manfred Lautenschläger, was given for the 6th time and awardee was Prof. Rainer Spanagel from the Central Institute of Mental Health, Mannheim/Germany for his outstanding research work in psychopharmacology. In addition, the Charles Lieber memorial lecture was presented by Prof. Yedi Israel from Santiago de Chile on his most recent research work involving stem cells in the brain and their regulation of alcohol consumption in animals.

Again, traditionally grown, a symposium between JMSAAS and ESBRA, has focused on various mechanisms of organ damage by alcohol. In this context ESBRA wants to thank especially Dr. Saito and Dr. Higuchi for the continuation of this important symposium. In Crete, a new board and a new president of ESBRA has been elected. For the next four years it is led by Prof. Sebastian Muel-
ler, an internationally well recognized expert in the field of hepatology. Prof. Mueller has contributed immensely to the understanding of alcoholic liver disease and its early diagnosis. In 2018, the ESBRA Nordmann-Award Meeting will take place in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, from 11th to 12th October. The meeting will be organized by Dres. Roberta Ward and Henrietta Walter and it will focus on “Alcohol and the Immune System”. The next biennial congress of ESBRA will take place in 2019 in the city of Lille/France and will be organized by Dr. Mikael Nassila.

Sebastian Mueller, MD PhD, Germany
ESBRA President

ISBRA/RSA 2020 Joint Congress in New Orleans, Louisiana, United States of America

The ISBRA Congress will be held jointly with the Research Society on Alcoholism (RSA) on June 20-24, 2020 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in New Orleans. New Orleans looks like no other city in the United States. The City developed from its founding by the French, through a time under Spanish control, and ultimately acquisition by the United States in the Louisiana Purchase. It is known for its music, diverse heritages, unique neighborhoods, spicy and delicious foods and of course, Mardi Gras. We expect over 1500 attendees from around the world to enjoy and take part in a program developed jointly by the two societies that will include symposia, poster sessions and plenary lectures. The ISBRA and RSA websites will interact via a direct link to provide timely information about calls for proposals and abstracts, the program once developed, registration, lodging, and other pertinent information. We invite you to mark the date of the joint ISBRA/RSA meeting on your calendar and to plan on attending this meeting, which will provide many opportunities for connecting with international colleagues focusing on alcohol research. In addition, the free Louisiana Cajun Zydeco Festival, celebrating Cajun music and its hybrid offspring Zydeco, will be occurring at the time of the meeting on the edge of the French Quarter on the grounds of the Old U.S. Mint. Come join us!
The VIII LASBRA INTERNATIONAL MEETING: “Neurobiological basis of alcoholism: from molecules to behavior” took place at the Hotel Cabañas Del Lago (Puerto Montt, Chile) as a Satellite of the Chilean Society for Pharmacology Annual Meeting, and began on November 20th and adjourned on November 22th, 2017. Attendance at the meeting was around 70 people, comprising researchers and graduate and undergraduate students from Chile, Brazil and Argentina. Scientists at the meeting were from Sweden, Germany, USA, Argentina, Brazil and Chile.

This meeting was organized by scientists of the Latin American Society for Biomedical Research on Alcoholism (LASBRA), with support from the International Brain Organization (IBRO), the International Society for Neurochemistry (ISN), LASBRA, PCI/Conicyt and the Universidad de Concepción.

The meeting included five keynote conferences given by outstanding researchers in the field of alcohol addiction. Dr. Yedy Israel (Chile) opened the meeting focusing on results that determine alcohol intake, from initiation to maintenance and relapse binge-drinking. Emphasis on genetic and molecular engineering was given and it also opened the discussion on translational opportunities for treatments. Dr. Karl Mann (Germany) discussed clinical evidence for ethanol treatment including approaches that aid in either abstinence or reduced drinking in the patients. Dr. Bo Soderpalm (Sweden) made a review on the role of ligand gated ion channels and how their modulations can be a future form of pharmacotherapy. Changes occurring in the physiology and structure of hippocampus after exposure to ethanol during early development were discussed during Dr. Fernando Valenzuela’s (USA) keynote talk. During the closing conference, Dr. Tamara Phillips (USA) proposed a strong link between alcohol and nicotine abuse.

In addition to the keynote speakers, there were three symposiums of two hours each featuring high level presentations given by local, regional and international speakers, such as Ricardo Pautassi (Argentina), Rosana Camarini (Brazil), Miriam Virgolini (Argentina), Fabio Cruz (Brasil), Paola Haeger (Chile) and Jose Guzman (Chile), among many others. These activities we focused on issues such as effects of ethanol during development, anxiety and emotions, molecular targets of alcohol in the brain, ethanol-induced motivation, plasticity and learning, genetic traits associated with alcohol abuse and dependence, etc.
Almost 40 posters were presented during a dedicated poster session by graduate students from Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. It should be noted that thanks to our supporting organizations, all students (20) who applied for scholarships were awarded one (US$ 400, 300 and 150 depending on distance) to help in the costs of attendance.

During the meeting, three prizes were given by the organization to outstanding young scientists. The best three poster presentations on alcohol research were awarded with the “Harold Kalant Award”. The Award Committee was composed of three professors (Drs. Phillips, Soderpalm and Valenzuela).

The meeting took place in an informal atmosphere with lively scientific discussions that went many times beyond the conference room, during pleasant meals.

Last but not least, the meeting offered the possibility of exchanging new data and discussing new paradigms on ethanol research. In summary, the meeting was a very important event that served as a forum of discussion, update and exchange between scientists of Latin America and throughout the world.

We hope to see you in Argentina for the IX LASBRA Meeting in 2019!

Organizers: Luis Aguayo, Rosana Camarini, Ricardo Pautassi

Rosana Camarini, PhD, Brazil
ISBRA Junior Vice President

APSAAR2017 Conference Summary and 2019 Conference in Malaysia

This was a joint meeting between the Taiwan Society of Addiction (TSA) and the Asia Pacific Society for Alcohol and Addiction Research (APSAAR). Both societies chose Taipei City, Taiwan for its World Congress from May 31st to June 3rd, 2017.

The conference was held under the theme of “The Challenges of Addiction: from basic re-search to clinical treatment.” This conference provided a dedicated platform to share cutting-edge scientific findings, medical practices and caregiver initiatives related to addiction re-search and therapy. It engaged a global audi-ence focused on the exchange of ideas and per-spectives for the better understanding of basic, preclinical, clinical, and transla-tion science knowledge on addiction-related biomedical phenomena. High level scientific sessions were successfully organized: plenary lectures, sym-posia, interactive and educational workshops, and debates.

The conference attracted 306 delegates comprising addiction scientists and basic researchers, clinicians, experts, and scholars interested in alcohol and addiction research from 12 countries: 8 in the Asia-Pacific region (Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, Japan, Aus-tralia, India, China, and Hong Kong), France, Nor-way, Lithuania, and the United States of America (as seen in figure above). Over 250 abstracts for oral and poster presentations were received, and 232 ab-stracts were accepted for discussion and debates. The Conference had a total of 43 different sessions, including six Keynote sessions, 24 Symposium ses-sions, nine Oral sessions (45 free oral presentation), three Special lecture sessions, and one Poster presentation session (92 Poster presentations).
The conference was opened by Prof. Ru-Band Lu (President of Congress), Peter Dodd (President of APSAAR), San-Yuan Huang (President of TSA). Substance abuse and dependence have been a universal challenge to all countries. The size and impact of this silent battle against substance abuse are no less than any other major combats in the world. This is a fight without boundaries and a fight that we cannot fail. Losing the war on drugs can bring harm and complications to the individuals and result in psychological and mental decline within the society.

Cutting-edge technology and research have been developed to minimize the problems that arise from drug abuse. Despite these developments, we have encountered many new challenges in the war on drugs. For the challenges outlined above, we invited academic scholars and experts from the Asia-Pacific and other regions share the latest biomedical, epidemiological, judicial, and educational research and experience on substance abuse. The 6th APSAAR conference will likely be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

ISBRA History and the New ISBRA Tabakoff Award, Named for a Founder of the Society

The beginnings of ISBRA can be traced back to scientific sessions held within the framework of the biennial meetings of ICAA (International Council on Alcohol and Addictions), an organization based in Lausanne, Switzerland. Milton Gross (a psychiatrist from SUNY Downstate Medical School and the Bronx V.A.) was the organizer of scientific sessions within the ICAA meetings held in Amsterdam, Netherlands (1972), Manchester, UK (1974), and Lausanne, Switzerland (1976). The majority of ICAA participants were interested primarily in treatment and prevention issues, but it was intended that the contents of the scientific sessions would be communicated to the plenary sessions by representatives of the research group. Unfortunately this did not prove to be feasible.

Members of the research group felt that their needs would be better met by forming an independent international alcohol research society that might perhaps hold its meetings in conjunction with those of ICAA to permit communication between the scientists and the service providers. For this purpose, Boris Tabakoff and J.-P. von Wartburg, with financial support from NIAAA, the U.S. Brewers Association and Swiss sources, organized an international scientific meeting in Chexbres, Switzerland, in 1978, at which a Steering Committee chaired by Boris Tabakoff was formed to draw up plans for the proposed new society. Statements of its aims, bylaws and operating procedures were prepared by this Steering Committee and presented for discussion to the research group at an initial meeting in Cardiff, Wales, in 1980. These plans were approved by the research group and a new Steering Committee was set up to proceed with the organization of the new society. The name chosen for it was the International Society for Biomedical Research on Alcohol (ISBRA), but it...
was agreed that the term “biomedical”, though differenti-
ating the new entity from social science organizations, was
to be interpreted broadly to include behavioral and cogni-
tive research of the type now subsumed under the field of
neurobiology. That definition has since been expanded to
include genetic and epidemiology research.

It was also agreed that the Board of Directors
would have broad international representation, and that
the society’s Presidents and sites of meetings would
rotate on a regular basis across the different parts of the
world where alcoholism research was conducted. The
First Congress of ISBRA was organized by Roland Scholz
(Germany), and Ronald Thurman (US). The meeting was
held in Munich, Germany, July 6-10, 1982, and represented
the consolidation of two successful symposia series: The
Fourth International Symposium on Alcohol and Aldehyde
Metabolizing Systems and the Sixth Biennial International
Symposium on Biomedical Research on Alcoholism. Subse-
quently the principle was adopted that ISBRA would serve
as an “umbrella group” with which regional alcoholism
research societies in different parts of the world would be
affiliated. At present, these regional societies include the
Research Society on Alcoholism (RSA) in North America;
the European Society for Biomedical Research on Alcohol-
ism (ESBRA); the Japanese Medical Society of Alcohol and
Addiction Studies (JMSAAS); the Asia Pacific Society for
Alcohol and Addiction Research (APSAAR); and, the Latin
American Society for Biomedical Research on Alcoholism
(LASBRA).

The society has met every two years at Congresses
held on a rotating basis in Asia, Australia, Europe and North
America. Each Congress is ideally held in conjunction with
the meeting of the alcohol research society of the country
or region where the Congress is being held. The society has
served to bring together researchers and clinicians in the
alcohol field from many countries and has promoted their
work world wide. In 1988, ISBRA became a Non-Govern-
mental Organization in Official Relations with the World
Health Organization.

Through the good offices of the Addiction Research
Foundation of Ontario, ISBRA was originally incorporated in
Canada and was headquartered for many years in Toronto
with an office in Chicago, Illinois, USA, overseen by Boris
Tabakoff. Subsequently, it was incorporated in the US in
Denver, Colorado, where the head office currently resides.
The society started modestly with 131 members from 17
countries in 1981 and has grown to 579 members from 39
countries in 2018. The ISBRA Congresses are open to reg-
istrants who are not members of the Society, and several
of the Congresses have had over 1,000 registered partici-
pants.
In Memoriam of Dr. Pavel Pronko

Dr. Pavel Pronko M.D., Ph.D., Sc.D. age 68, died on March 20th, 2018.

Born in Belarus, October 18, 1949, with a thirst for knowledge, he received his M.D. degree from Grodno State Medical University in 1972, his Ph.D. in biochemistry from Institute of Physiology in 1978, Minsk and his D.Sci. from Institute of Radiobiology NAS of Belarus in 2005.

He worked for the Institute of Biochemistry of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) of Belarus in Grodno for 45 years doing biomedical research on alcohol dependence. He started as a junior research associate continuing as a deputy and active Director until his death.

He was a prominent Byelorussian scientist best known for his work on ethanol and acetaldehyde metabolism, pharmacokinetics and toxicity. His last monograph “Role of acetaldehyde in mechanisms of sensitivity, tolerance and craving for alcohol” was published in 2016.

He was on advisory and supervisory committees for graduate students and he was teaching biochemistry to university graduate students.

He was promoting international cooperation between Byelorussian scientists and leading scientists in the field of biomedical research on alcoholism and served as an organizer of numerous meetings and international conferences.
Applying for ISBRA Membership

If you are already a member in good standing of one of ISBRA’s affiliated regional societies (ESBRA, JMSAAS, RSA, APSAAR or LASBRA) you need only complete the online ISBRA Membership Application Form, which can be found at http://isbra.com/membership (if you have questions, please contact Ms. Lintz at isbra@isbra.com). Annual dues for these members are $45. If you are not a member of an affiliated Society, you must submit an up-to-date Curriculum Vitae and the Membership Application Form. Annual dues for these members are $60, and all information can be submitted online at http://isbra.com/membership. The Membership Committee reviews applications 4 times a year. Application deadlines are: January 2, April 1, July 1 and October 1. You will be notified in writing of your formal acceptance into ISBRA.