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Paolo Paganetti

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Markus Rüegg

Nicole Schaeren-Wiemers

Peter Sonderegger

Irene Tobler

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Editorial

The regular publication of an electronic Newsletter is one of the several steps the Council of the SSN has decided to take to improve communication with the members, to make you feel our Society is alive and is here to serve the interests of the Neuroscience community in Switzerland.

This Newsletter will be distributed 3-4 times a year to all our members. It will be published in electronic form only and the current volume will be freely available of our website.

One of its main "raison d'être" is to serve as a platform for the exchange of information within the SSN. Extensive space will be reserved for announcements from the members (meetings, workshops, fellowships, positions, etc). An on-line Newsletter should be a dynamic instrument reflecting the expectations of its readers. We welcome your feedback about the content and presentation of this first issue. Contributions for future issues are also eagerly awaited.

This first issue is almost entirely devoted to the other steps that we are taking to make our Society more attractive and more efficient:

First of all, the website of the SSN has been entirely redesigned and has now an easily memorized URL. It will be regularly updated and will contain all the information about the current activities of the SSN (see page 2).

Secondly, to improve recognition of scientific excellence among our student members, we are proud to announce the creation of an Annual Award for the Best Publication, which will recognize work done primarily by a student (see page 3).

Thirdly, the SSN will offer travel fellowships for student members on a regular basis to attend the FENS meeting and the meeting of the Society for Neuroscience (USA). A set of simple rules will be implemented to ensure fair and rapid selection of applications (see page 4).

We hope you will support these initiatives by helping us maintaining a dynamic website and encouraging your students to apply to these competitive awards.

For the committee,

Jean-Marc Fritschy

Address:

*J.-M. Fritschy, Institute of Pharmacology and Toxicology, University of Zurich,
Winterthurerstrasse 190, CH – 8057 Zurich, Switzerland. Tel. +41 1 635 5926; Fax. +41 1 635 6874;
e-mail: ssn@pharma.unizh.ch*

The New Website of the SSN

Our website has a new URL (<http://www.swissneuroscience.ch>), a new look, and many improved functions.



The website is available for announcements. Please send all information of general interest to be posted on the internet (in English) to ssn@pharma.unizh.ch

Membership Drive

The dynamic nature of our membership, with over 30% student-members and postdocs, implies a rapid turnover. While the SSN grew rapidly during the first years to become the fifth largest Neuroscience Society in Europe, the number of members peaked in 2002 and is declining this year. This is mainly due to the non-replacement of student-members who have moved on in their carriers.

Our goal is to reverse this negative trend and to increase further the size of the SSN in the future. This is feasible since only a minority of Neuroscientists in Switzerland is affiliated to the SSN. To play a more active role, notably with regard to promoting Neuroscience research at the political level and to increasing public awareness and support for Neuroscience, we need more members and consequently more financial means.

It is the responsibility of all our members to inform their collaborators and students, as well

as their colleagues, about the existence and goals of the SSN, and to encourage them to join our Society. Particularly students have to be aware that they are entitled to apply for travel fellowships only if they are members of the SSN. Likewise, the award for the “Best Publication” is reserved for our student-members.

The Council of the SSN will not remain inactive. We will focus on attracting corporate members and sponsors to finance our new activities, in particular the travel fellowships and the awards distributed at the annual meeting. You can support this endeavor by helping us identifying potential sponsors to approach.

Help us keep our membership database up-to-date by communicating any change of address or e-mail. A form to this effect can be found on the website.

New: The Annual SSN Award for the Best Publication

The Council of the SSN has adopted the following rules at its meeting of 22nd May 2002:

1. The SSN awards, every calendar year, a prize to a student-member (working towards a pre-doctoral degree or a doctoral degree) for a best publication. The prize is given at the Annual meeting of the SSN. The amount of the Award is decided every year by the Council.
2. Awarded are peer-reviewed articles published (or accepted for publication) between July 1st of the previous year and June 30 of the year the application is submitted. Only articles to which the applicant has contributed substantially will be considered.
3. The applicant has to be member of the SSN and has to be first or last author on the article. The application includes the article to be awarded, a short description of the significance of the work (max. one A4 page), and a letter of support from the main supervisor of the student describing his/her contribution to the article to be awarded. Five copies of the application should be sent to the President.
4. The deadline for application is August 31 for an article to be awarded at the following Annual meeting.
5. A jury formed of at least 5 members of the SSN committee (including the president and vice-president) will revise the applications. The selection will be based on scientific and/or clinical excellence. The decision of the jury cannot be appealed. All applicants will be informed in writing.
6. The rules for application and the amount of award, as well as an application form, will be posted on the website of the SSN.

A call for applications will follow during the summer 2002. This award will be distributed for the first time at the 2003 Annual Meeting in Fribourg (Saturday 18th January).

Annual meeting

The 2002 joint Annual meeting of the SSN and Swiss Society for Sleep Research, Sleep Medicine and Chronobiology was held in Geneva on 12th January 2002. The meeting drew a large attendance and was highly successful, thanks to the efficient organization of Dr. Mehdi Tafti and colleagues.

Sponsoring of the meeting generated a sizeable profit to be shared between two partner societies. This source of funding is most welcome to further support travel fellowships and poster prizes for the student-membership.

The council of the SSN has decided to introduce a prize for the “Best clinical presentation” to be given at each Annual Meeting. This prize was first given at the 2001 Meeting in Bern and should foster recognition of clinical studies among our members.

The next Annual Meeting will be held in Fribourg (Ecole d’Ingénieurs) jointly with the Swiss Society of Psychiatry and Psychology on Saturday 18th January, 2003. The call for Abstracts will be sent to you in September.

Travel Fellowships for Student Members

The Council of the SSN has decided to provide travel fellowships on a regular basis and to formalize the rules for obtaining them, as follows:

1. The SSN awards travel fellowships for its student-members (working towards a pre-doctoral degree or a doctoral degree) to attend the FENS meeting and the Society for Neuroscience Meeting (USA).
2. The committee of the SSN decides on a yearly basis the number of awards to be given and the amount awarded. This information, along with an application form, will be posted on the website of the SSN, at least one month before deadline for abstract submission.
3. To apply for a fellowship, student-members have to fill in the application form (to be signed by their supervisor) and include a copy of their abstract. They have to be the first author on the abstract. Non-members can apply for membership at the same time and need to include a proof of payment of the annual fees.
4. The selection of abstracts to be awarded will be made by a group of at least 5 members of the SSN committee. It will be based on scientific excellence.
5. All applicants will be informed in writing. Each student-member is entitled maximally one award per calendar year.
6. Applicants receiving a travel fellowship from another source are requested to retract their application to the SSN.

This year, 10 travel fellowships of Fr. 500.- were awarded to attend the FENS meeting in Paris. Over 30 applications were received, reflecting the popularity of these fellowships. The laureates are listed on the website. The next round of fellowships will be announced in 2003.

News from the FENS and IBRO

Reminder: Being a member of the SSN makes you automatically a member of the FENS. This gives you free on-line access to the European Journal of Neuroscience (published by Blackwell Sciences on behalf of the FENS), as well as reduced registration fees for the FENS meeting.

Prof. Pierre Magistretti, former President of the SSN, is President-Elect of the FENS and will take his office as President at the next Meeting in Paris. His success demonstrates that national Societies from small countries can play a decisive role in a Federation such as the FENS. Also our Society should play a major role in FENS.

The IBRO (International Brain Research Organization) has launched a very powerful website (www.ibro.org), which is a mine of practical information, especially the “IBRO-Edu” pages. The “Map and compass” provides a remarkable step-by-step guide on how to write a scientific publication. To be read absolutely!

The sixth IBRO congress of Neuroscience will be held on 10-15 July 2003 in Prague. Additional information can be found on the congress website (www.ibro2003.cz).