



## Swiss Society for Neuroscience (SSN)

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[www.swissneuroscience.ch](http://www.swissneuroscience.ch)

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### Editorial

Recent publications of a few articles aimed at the public were rather critical on research projects whose goal is to study brain function using animal models in general, and subhuman primates in particular. The scientific objectives of the research projects were superficially described using a biased line of argumentation. The Swiss Society for Neuroscience (SSN) is aware of its crucial role as "Professional Society", whether or not these incidents represent the beginning of a new wave of actions piloted by groups of animal rights activists. Although new technical developments allow more and more detailed and precise investigations of the brain in human subjects, animal models remain an absolute necessity to elucidate the complex mechanisms of brain function and develop adequate and efficient treatments to cure human (and animal) nervous diseases. In line with the Society for Neuroscience (SfN, based in the USA), the SSN will create starting 2006 a "committee on animal research", whose role will be to assist in handling the attacks linked to animal experimentation towards neuroscientists. As a first step, the SSN invites its members to consult publications edited by the SfN ([www.sfn.org](http://www.sfn.org)), in particular the precious document entitled "Guidelines for Crisis Management: Responsible Use of Animals and Humans in Research". In this context, the SSN will continue in the future to offer symposia for continuous education on animal experimentation, ensuring proper training of the Swiss neuroscientists engaged in animal experimentation. Another important role for this new SSN "committee on animal research" will be to interact with the "Media and Communication" Services of the institutions hosting animal experimentation, as well as "funding" agencies, which all have to play a very important role in the defense of the researchers conducting responsible animal experimentation. Efforts aimed at informing the public on the progress of the research in Neuroscience and the benefit of animal experimentation remain a priority, a reason why the SSN invites you to contribute to the "Brain Awareness Week" activities in spring 2006. So far, in all votes on the issue of animal experimentation, the Swiss population clearly and democratically expressed its support to responsible use of animals in research. In the future, keeping the public informed of our work is the only way to guarantee the continuation of this crucial support.

Eric M. Rouiller

## SSN travel fellowships 2005

We have received 24 applications from young scientists of the SSN to attend the SfN meeting that will take place in November 2005 in Washington DC (USA). The applications were evaluated by the SSN Council based on the abstract, the CV, a letter of motivation and a letter of reference from the supervisor. The following 12 young scientists were awarded a SSN travel fellowship of Frs 1000:

**GALIC Milos, WYSS Alexander, FREUND Patrick, MERCIER Manuel, BICKEL Stephan, DAYER Alexandre, LEDERGERBER Debora, KULANGARA Karina, Le BÉ Jean-Vincent, FUCHS Sebastian, SOONTORMALAI Areejittra, HAUSER Jonas.**

In a first round, **Cappe Céline** and **Bourikas Dimitris** were awarded but they both later received a travel fellowship from another source. Their SSN travel fellowship was thus transferred to two other applicants.

In 2006, the SSN will offer travel fellowships amounting to Frs 700 to attend the FENS 2006 meeting in Vienna. In addition, as every year, travel fellowships of Frs 1000 will also be offered to attend the SfN 2006 meeting, which will take place in Atlanta (October 14-18th, 2006, in replacement of New-Orleans). The final number of travel fellowships offered to attend the FENS 2006 and the SfN 2006 meetings will be settled by the SSN council in January 2006 (see the SSN website at the beginning of 2006).

New-Orleans was a highly appreciated location for the SfN meetings, a fascinating city with an extremely friendly population. This, many Swiss neuroscientists have discovered on the occasion of past SfN meetings. Our thoughts are with the victims of the hurricanes and the SSN hopes that the inhabitants of New-Orleans will receive all the assistance needed for the reconstruction of the city, so that they can return to a decent life very soon and that future SfN meetings may again be organized in their wonderful city.

## SSN meeting 2006 in Basel

The SSN annual meeting in 2006 will take place in Basel, on January 28<sup>th</sup>, in collaboration with the "Swiss Society of Neuro-Radiology".

The final announcement with the program of the meeting is available on the Home Page of the SSN website. On-line registration as "**participant**" on the SSN website is already open. Please do not forget to register irrespective of whether you will submit (or have submitted) an abstract or not. As usual, there is no registration fee; food and beverages will be offered to all participants.

The SSN website has been updated recently in order to offer you the possibility to submit "abstracts" on-line from the website. All abstracts have to be submitted on-line. **On-line abstract submission will begin on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2005. The deadline for abstract submission is November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2005.** To submit an abstract, select "Abstract" in the menu of the SSN website and follow the instructions under "Abstract submission". The body of the abstract is limited to 2000 characters. Abstracts can still be modified after initial submission until the deadline of November 28th. Past the deadline, all submitted abstracts in their final form can be accessed from the SSN website.

The format of posters is 90 cm wide and 120 cm high.

Authors selected for the "DataBlitz" presentations and the "Best clinical" presentation (in addition to the poster presentation) will be informed by the local organizers about 3 weeks before the meeting.

As usual, emphasis is put on the poster session, allowing the young SSN scientists to present their work to the Swiss neuroscience community. Another important event of the annual meeting in Basel will be our business meeting, to keep you informed about our activities during the year 2005, in particular the preparation of the FENS 2008 in Geneva under the responsibility of the SSN and the local committee headed by Prof. Ann Kato. The SSN council looks forward to seeing you in Basel.

Eric M. Rouiller

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### Meeting announcement

#### **9<sup>th</sup> International Geneva/Springfield Symposium on Advances in Alzheimer Therapy**

**Geneva, Switzerland, April 19-22, 2006**

[www.siumed.edu/sme](http://www.siumed.edu/sme)

## SSN PhD Student Day 2005



Pursuing the successful experience of a visit to the industry (visit to Novartis Pharma AG in 2004), 30 SSN Ph.D. students visited on June 14th, 2005 the Research Center of **Serono**, in Geneva, accompanied by the SSN council represented by Christian Lüscher and Eric M. Rouiller. The SSN council is very grateful to our generous sponsor, **Serono**, for the kind hospitality and for presenting several facets of neuroscience research in an industrial environment. A report from a SSN Ph.D. student (Alex Wyss) about this visit is available on the SSN web site for more detailed information.

In addition, find below a few feedback comments from (anonymous) SSN PhD students who attended the visit:

It was a good opportunity to visit Serono. I think that it is very important for us (PhD student) to have a look in all possibilities we have for our future career. In that point, the "pessimistic but realistic" talk of Lionel Arnaud and the general discussion that followed was very interesting. Then, we all know that both academic and private ways are quite difficult/complex for scientists who are looking for a stabilized job. The laboratories visit was of less interest since they did not show us the neurobiological department. To resume, I am glad to have participated to this visit. Now, I know more about the

industrial fundamental research philosophy. For all these points, the SSN have to continue this kind of activities (definitely).

I think as PhD student this is a good opportunity to have an insight on what is happening in pharmaceutical and biotech industry, and this is best achieved by visiting companies. I also thought visiting the labs was a good idea as it is important to be also aware of what is happening in other fields (chemistry, technology, etc.); but the time was a bit too short. As for the talks, I think they were interesting but could have been more targeted to PhD students. Another good point is that we had some time to meet students from other cities. I think that such events should be held again, to give us an insight of some of the available possibilities once we finish our studies.

First, I think that the talks were excellent. They allowed me to get a deep understanding of how the pharmaceutical industry runs its business. The place of research was clearly stated and clearly defined in the overall production chain. It was very interesting to be introduced to the concept of pipe, to the different phases of clinical trials and in general to the different steps of drugs development. Each speaker brought his vision of the company and each talk was very informative. Personally, I think that they could have removed the PhD student and scheduled another postdoc instead since most of the audience was composed of future postdocs. Anyway, it was interesting to learn about a PhD in a company just to get a point of comparison with my own experience of the PhD. My overall feeling after the talks is that I got a clear and relatively objective idea of the life of a scientist in a pharmaceutical company (or at least in Serono) and this is highly valuable knowledge for the planning of my future career. The second part of the visit (the labs) was less informative for me and could have been skipped. My background is theoretical physics and I am not used to experimental labs. It was therefore useless for me to have a look at all these experimental setups since they pretty much look the same to my neophyte eyes. I guess that this is highly conditioned by my background and this part of the visit was maybe much better for other students but I have the feeling that it was not so interesting compared to the talks

I think it's very important for PhD students working at the university to get an insight into research in the industry. I liked both parts of the visit, the talks and the guided tour. It would have been illustrative if the Serono people had shown one tangible example of the history of a drug, from the chemical substance to the final product on the market. But perhaps there are too many patents on this way which forbid them telling the whole story.

I was actually disappointed by the trip. It was not what I was expecting. The head scientists all seemed to give similar talks with minimal detail and then left. The tour of the facility was what I expected. I understand that it is a business and they need to be secretive about their work, but I feel that we were given a very 'bare-bones' tour geared toward high school children, not current PhD students interested in possibly working for the company. Also, I expected that the scientists would come back after the tours and talk with us during the 'cocktail' but they did not. Thank you again for organizing this trip. I expected to learn a lot on the trip about working for a pharmaceutical company, and I did.