

The Teratology Society Newsletter

Volume 17, Issue 2

June 2009

Letter from the President

Christina Chambers

We are looking forward to seeing many of our members at the annual meeting in Puerto Rico, but recognize that this has proven to be a difficult year for some in securing travel funds. This makes our development of supplemental and “year-round” methods of communication all the more important. To this end, the Website continues to be a focal point of our communication with members. The Website Committee headed by Tony DeLise has done a stellar job in developing both a functional and very appealing site. However, the Committee notes that there is still an urgent need for development of content for the Student Page – potentially a place where students can go to learn about employment opportunities, to network with other students, etc. To help move this effort forward, we are seeking a “Student Editor” for this page. Any student member who would be interested in taking on the Editorship role over the next year would be very welcome. Interested volunteers should contact Tonia Masson at the Society Business Office.

In keeping with the Society’s expanded “electronic visibility”, the Science Committee, with Ron Hood as

continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1** Letter from the President/ Annual Meeting Update
- 2** 50th Anniversary Planning
- 3/4** Alcohol use in pregnancy/ Various News Items
- 5** Medpedia project / MentorCorps Update
- 6** Strategic Planning Update

Annual Meeting Update

Barbara Hales

The 2009 annual meeting is almost upon us! The meeting will be action-packed, including an exciting multi-disciplinary array of education courses, symposia, special events, and platform and poster sessions. Check out the program! We received 129 abstracts so you will find plenty of outstanding new science in the platform and poster presentations, too.

The Wyndham Rio Mar Resort in Puerto Rico is the perfect setting to indulge in discussions with established experts in the field, new researchers, and students and to reconnect with colleagues, make new friends, or network. If you have not yet registered, it is not too late to do so - regular registration continues to be available through June 23 at <http://teratology.org> or on-site once the meeting begins. It is still a buyer’s market so there are some great deals on flights IF you make your reservations soon. See you in Puerto Rico!

You will want to mark the dates for our 50th Anniversary meeting, June 26-30, 2010, on your calendar right now. The program is just being set up now so please be sure to send your suggestions for this special celebration of the Society, past, present and future, to John Rogers at rogers.john@epa.gov. You will not want to miss out on this meeting!

Finally, as we prepare for our 50th anniversary, we welcome your input and interest in becoming more involved in our Society. Please let me (barbara.hales@mcgill.ca) know HOW you would like to be involved in the Society. We still have openings on many of our committees. We need your help to keep our Society alive and maximize our impact over the next 50 years! ■

continued from page 1

primary editor, has gone live with a page on Medpedia. Please visit [http://wiki.medpedia.com/Clinical:The Teratology Society](http://wiki.medpedia.com/Clinical:The_Teratology_Society) to see this work in progress. Another important outreach and educational activity is taking shape under the effective leadership of Kok-Wah Hew. The Society's first satellite embryology and teratology course is planned for October 2010 to be held in the DC area, with an exciting slate of topics and speakers planned. Look for more information on the website as the course program and details are finalized.

In anticipation of the 50th anniversary meeting in Louisville in 2010, at this year's meeting in Puerto Rico we will be moving forward with a full-court press to complete the "MentorCorps" interviews first initiated by Elaine Faustman two years ago. The purpose of these interviews is to create a video documentary of memories, reflections, hopes and dreams of founding and senior members of the Society. Thanks to Christine Curran who has volunteered to lend her expertise in videography to this effort, you may be asked to be interviewed, or to conduct an interview at the meeting in Puerto Rico. We plan to have the full set of interviews archived for viewing on the website by the 50th anniversary meeting.

Finally, substantial progress has been made by the Society in each of the target areas identified in the most recent Strategic Plan. One of the most challenging areas has proven to be the improved "Visibility" target area, which encompasses very broad goals. To help tackle this in an organized way, an ad hoc Advisory Group headed by Wafa Harrouk has recently reviewed the many tasks identified as high priority by the Visibility group. This Advisory Group has come up with recommendations for prioritization and assignment of tasks across committees, and their input has been very welcome.

We hope you will be able to enjoy the fantastic meeting program put together by Barbara Hales and her Meeting Planning group for this year. We also encourage you to contact the Business Office or Barbara if you have an interest in serving on any committee, have ideas for the Society, or would just like to volunteer in some capacity. We need your help, your input, and your comments. ■

Planning for the 50th Annual Meeting

John Rogers

And A Message from the 2010 Program Committee

We are excited about seeing everyone in Puerto Rico! The excellent program assembled by the 2009 Program Committee is the result of their hard work as well as the great response from the membership in submitting topics for the many sessions. Now we are trying to do the same for the 2010 Annual Meeting in Louisville, and there is still time to submit suggestions for Symposia, Workshops, Roundtables, or individual lectures. The theme for the 2010 meeting is "Healthy Lifestyles for Parents and Children." We are particularly interested in topics germane to this, but any and all suggestions are welcome. The 2010 meeting will be special because it is our 50th, and we are planning to have special displays and events commemorating this. Again, any and all suggestions are welcome. But time is getting short, so please send suggestions to John Rogers at rogers.john@epa.gov.

You should have received or will shortly receive an e-mail questionnaire asking about your history in the Society as well as your academic and professional history. We are gathering this information to have a better database of information about the society and its members to help with some of the activities celebrating the 50th meeting. I hope you will take the time to provide as much of this information as possible.

Thanks to the many members who have already submitted ideas for the 2010 meeting. ■

New FASEB Representatives

The following individuals have agreed to represent the Society on FASEB Committees:

Board – Tony Scialli

Publications & Communications Committee – Belen Tornesi

Science Policy Committee - Claudia Kappen

Science Research Conferences Advisory Committee - Michael O'Hara

Many thanks to these members for agreeing to serve the Society, and a great big thank you to John DeSesso who has served the Society on the Board of Directors for several years. ■

CME Credits Available

CME credits are available for watching the video, "Understanding the Role of Folic Acid in Preconception Care" from the Discovery Health Channel. For more information, just log onto:

www.discoveryhealthme.discovery.com ■

Society Whistleblower Policy

The purpose of the Society's new Whistleblower policy is to set the policy and establish the procedures for protection of whistleblowers from retaliation. Such protection was afforded by passage of the Sarbanes Oxley Act of 2002. The following policy was approved by the Teratology Society Council during its May conference call.

The Teratology Society, through its management company AIM, is fully committed to providing a workplace that is open to and fosters communication concerning all aspects of its organizations and operations, including compliance with all applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations, rules and ordinances related to corporate or financial misconduct and fraud. The Teratology Society has designated National Hotline Services as the independent third party responsible for receipt of any reports of fraudulent activity or misconduct by Teratology Society leadership or staff.

As a member of the Teratology Society if you become aware of fraudulent activity or misconduct by Teratology Society leadership or staff you may contact *the National Hotline Services, Inc. toll-free fraud hotline at (800) 826-6762.* ■

Alcohol Use Among Pregnant and Non-Pregnant Women in the US

Summarized from MMWR 58(19):529, 2009

The CDC recently reviewed data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System surveys collected from 1991 to 2005. They found that any alcohol use and binge drinking among pregnant women and non-pregnant women of childbearing age had not changed substantially from 1991 to 2005. During the most recent survey (2001-2005), 329,975 women aged 18-44 were interviewed. The highest percentages of women reporting any alcohol use were aged 35-44 (17.7%), college graduate (14.4%), employed (13.7%), and unmarried (13.4%). Of the women interviewed for the survey, 4.2% were pregnant at the time. The finding that older, more educated, employed, unmarried pregnant women were more likely to use alcohol supports results from previous studies. The reasons for this are not clear, but could include that: 1- older women may be more likely to be alcohol dependent and unable to abstain during pregnancy; 2- more educated and employed women may have more discretionary money to buy alcohol; and 3 – unmarried women may attend more social occasions where alcohol is served.

The CDC is funding Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Regional Training Centers to improve health-care provider skills at screening women for alcohol use and providing brief interventions. They are also working with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Indian Health Service to train health-care workers in systems of care funded by these Agencies. The CDC has also funded seven state-based fetal alcohol syndrome prevention programs for women in high-risk geographic areas or high-risk subpopulations; these programs are completing work in developing, implementing, and evaluating population-based and targeted programs. The focus of all of these efforts is to reduce the prevalence of alcohol use during pregnancy, a condition that continues to be an important public health concern. ■



You're Invited!!!

What: The Teratology Society's 50th Annual Meeting!

When: June 26-30, 2010

Where: Marriott Louisville Downtown
Louisville, KY

Plans are underway for the celebration as the Society turns the big 5-0!
Be sure to be there – make your plans early.
Keep an eye on your email box and the website for important information and
deadlines.

Please send ideas for workshops, symposia, lectures or anything else to:
rogers.john@epa.gov

You don't want to miss this one!

The Medpedia Project

Ron Hood

Nearly a year ago I was made aware of a new Internet entity, Medpedia (<http://www.medpedia.com/>), that I believed could become a useful platform for outreach and publicity for the Teratology Society. When I shared that view with Tina Chambers, she agreed and brought the topic before the Society's Council. Oversight responsibility was then given to the Society's Science Committee. The Medpedia Project is described as follows: "a long-term, worldwide project to evolve a new model for sharing and advancing knowledge about health, medicine, and the body among medical professionals and the general public. This model is founded on providing a free online technology platform that is collaborative, interdisciplinary, and transparent." According to its website, "Users of the platform include physicians, consumers, medical and scientific journals, medical schools, research institutes, medical associations, hospitals, for-profit and non-profit organizations, expert patients, policy makers, students, non-professionals taking care of loved ones, individual medical professionals, scientists, etc." As Medpedia grows, it is intended to "become a repository of up-to-date unbiased medical information, contributed and maintained by health experts around the world, and freely available to everyone."

The Medpedia Project has been developed in association with a number of reputable organizations, including Harvard Medical School, Stanford School of Medicine, Berkeley School of Public Health, and the University of Michigan Medical School. Although its Internet platform is technically the same as that used by Wikipedia, Medpedia differs from Wikipedia in a crucial aspect. You can obtain privileges to directly edit or add to the knowledge base *only* if you are a physician or if you have a PhD in a biomedical field. Other medical professionals can "suggest changes" to the medical knowledge base.

Any editor can claim lead editorship of a

Medpedia article and become responsible for keeping track of all edits to that article page. Responsibility begins at the moment an editor takes on the role of Lead Editor (on behalf of an organization, such as the Teratology Society, or on his/her own), and the editorial control is by article, rather than by broad area. Many groups have responsibility for a number of articles in their topic areas. The more articles they add, and for which they claim lead editorship, the more different topics within their area they control. Any Editor can add any article.

I intend to take Lead Editorship of the page on "Teratology" that was initially contributed by a pediatric neuropathologist (previously a molecular geneticist), Paul E. Neumann, MD. I would welcome input from Teratology Society members regarding additional pages (among those currently without Lead Editors) of which we might take ownership on behalf of the Society, and any proposed edits to those pages. ■

"MentorCorps" Update

You may recall the MentorCorps interviews that were taped at the 2007 and 2008 Annual Meetings. The project is alive and well! As you may remember, this project is similar to NPR's "StoryCorps" which consists of interviews with family members and friends. We will continue to interview Society members and welcome you to interview your mentor and/or others that have influenced you in our Society at the Annual Meeting in Puerto Rico. We hope to compile a series of video clips for our anniversary celebration to document the roles that our Teratology members have played in the history and future of our Society.

If you would like to do one of these interviews, there will be a sign-up sheet to schedule "booth" time to run a 5-7 minute interview. We will provide some example questions that you may want to use to focus these interviews. Groups are welcome as well as one-on-one interviews. ■

Strategic Planning Update

Deborah Hansen

In April of 2007, the Society held its third strategic planning session. Five Working Groups were established as a result of that meeting, and those Working Groups met by conference call several times last year. Each of the Working Groups submitted a final report that prioritized their recommendations to be addressed over the next 1 – 3 years and identified which Committee(s) would be responsible for implementing these recommendations. The final reports were reviewed by the Oversight Committee (Melissa Tassinari, Tina Chambers, Elaine Faustman, and Barbara Hales).

Annual Meeting Working Group [Sonja Rasmussen and Tina Chambers, Chairs] – Many of the priorities identified by this Working Group have been implemented in the 2008 and 2009 Annual Meetings, and there were no Committee changes recommended.

Communications Working Group [Ed Carney and George Daston, Chairs] – This group primarily focused on the redesign of the website which was accomplished in 2008. Some issues regarding updating of content on the website and who should be responsible for such updates remain to be determined.

Membership Working Group [Barbara Abbott and Koh-Wah Hew, Chairs] – This group recommended a demographic analysis of Society membership which would include tracking and following up on student/postdoc members. A part of the charge to the Membership Committee will be to focus on recruitment and retention of new members. It was recommended that the Membership Committee be enlarged to carry out these additional responsibilities.

Shared Scientific Identity Working Group [Elaine Faustman and Shelley Tyl, Chairs] – This Working Group recommended that session chairs at the 2008 and 2009 Annual Meetings introduce their session by highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of the session. Members of this Working Group participated in the design of the 2009 program in

which this interdisciplinary approach in designing symposia was again utilized. The Group also modified the definition of the shared scientific identity as well as their strategic intent statement. Their recommendation for organizational change was the establishment of a new Science Committee which has recently been established with two members of this Working Group serving as co-chairs.

Visibility Working Group [Janine Polifka and Melissa Tassinari, Chairs] – This Working Group had a number of recommendations involving increasing awareness of the Society in the public eye and increasing our educational efforts. The recommendations appeared to involve both publicity of the Society as well as our on-going efforts in public affairs. These were viewed as two different activities and may not fit totally under the Public Affairs Committee as currently charged. An ad hoc committee is currently meeting to review the recommendations of the Visibility Working Group and to decide which of their recommendations will fit under the Public Affairs Committee and which should be assigned to a new public outreach committee. ■

Plan Ahead Future TS Meetings!

50th Annual Meeting

June 26-30, 2010
Marriott Louisville Downtown
Louisville, KY

51st Annual Meeting

June 24-29, 2011
Loews Coronado Bay Resort
Coronado, CA

52nd Annual Meeting

June 22-27, 2012
Marriott Waterfront Baltimore
Baltimore, MD

53rd Annual Meeting

June 21-26, 2013
Loews Ventana Canyon Resort
Tucson, AZ