

Spring Neuroscience Meeting is a resounding success

By Simone Otto

The Triangle chapter of the Society for Neuroscience (Triangle SfN) held its first Spring Neuroscience Meeting April 10 at Research Triangle Park headquarters in North Carolina. NIEHS was one of the sponsors of this event, which was well-attended by members of the NIEHS Neuroscience Laboratory and other area researchers in the field of neuroscience.

The meeting included presentations by local scientists, a keynote address, and a poster session. In between talks and during the poster session, attendees had opportunities to visit with sponsors.

Local speakers impress

The event began with presentations from three area scientists. [Regina Carelli, Ph.D.](#)

(<http://reginacarelli.web.unc.edu/>)

, with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), focused on the “Dynamics of Rapid Dopamine Signaling During Decision Making.” Her lab studies how dopamine release balances the cost of getting a reward with the size of the reward.

[Stephen Lisberger, Ph.D.](#)

(<http://www.neuro.duke.edu/training-faculty/phd-training-faculty/stephen-lisberger>)

, with the Duke University School of Medicine, focused on discovering “Mechanisms of Motor Learning by Just Listening to the Cerebellum While It Works.” According to Lisberger, he meant his title to be both a philosophical statement and a scientific statement. “The art of listening carefully to the brain seems to be dying,” he said. “[We can] discover mechanisms by just listening.”

[Emilio Salinas, Ph.D.](#)

(<http://www.wakehealth.edu/Research/Neurobiology-and-Anatomy/Emilio-Salinas,-PhD.htm>)

, of the Wake Forest School of Medicine, spoke on “Cognitive Manipulation of Oculomotor Activity in the Frontal Cortex of Monkeys Performing a Simple Reaction-time Task With Reward Bias.” Salinas studies the relationship between variability in behavior and variability in neural activity.

Internationally known scientist gives keynote address

[Adron Harris, Ph.D.](#)

(http://www.utexas.edu/research/wcaar/harris/?page_id=19)

, director of the Waggoner Center for Alcohol and Addiction at the University of Texas at Austin, presented the keynote address. “Adron received his Ph.D. from UNC Chapel Hill, and from there he’s gone on to a most distinguished career as evidenced by his numerous publications,” said Patricia Jensen, Ph.D., head of the NIEHS Developmental Neurobiology Group, in her introduction.

Harris fascinated the audience by discussing what reviewers of one of his scientific papers termed more of a hallucination than a moment — namely, his discovery of the ability of alcohol to enter into a small pocket between alpha helices and stabilize an otherwise fluid channel, which leads to either enhancement or inhibition, depending on the channel involved.

Poster session buzzed with activity

Poster awards were given to both undergraduate and postdoctoral fellows. Two winners, predoctoral fellow Kelly Carstens and research fellow Georgia Alexander, Ph.D., work in the NIEHS Synaptic and Developmental Plasticity Group, led by [Serena Dudek, Ph.D.](#)

The session buzzed with the energy of the attendees as they discussed posters and networked with scientists from Duke University, East Carolina State University, NIEHS, North Carolina Central University, North Carolina State University (NCSU), and UNC.

The Triangle SfN was reinstated less than one year ago with the help of members of NIEHS, particularly Shannon Farris, Ph.D. (see related [story](#)). “The Triangle is home to some of the top universities and research institutes in the country, and it is my hope that through Triangle SfN individuals from each of these institutions will be able to form a tight and collaborative network,” wrote [Amir Rezvani, Ph.D.](#)

(<http://www.dibs.duke.edu/research/profiles/56-amir-rezvani>)

, president of Triangle SfN and professor at the Duke Institute for Brain Sciences, in his welcome letter. Judging by the success of the spring meeting, the network is well underway, and organizers are already looking toward next year’s event.

(Simone Otto, Ph.D., is an Intramural Research and Training Award Fellow in the Ion Channel Physiology Group.)



Carstens, left, was presented with an award for her poster, “Perineuronal Nets in Hippocampal Area CA2: A Role in Restricting Synaptic Plasticity?” by lab mate Farris. (Photo courtesy of Leah Townsend)

Poster award winners

Undergraduate or graduate

Leslie Wilson, NCSU
Kelly Carstens, NIEHS and UNC
Chris Foster, UNC
Leah Townsend, UNC

Postdoctoral

Georgia Alexander, Ph.D., NIEHS
Ryan Bell, Ph.D., UNC



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Shown from right, Harris received a commemorative plaque from Jensen, Farris, and Rezvani, after giving his keynote address, "Alcohol and the Brain: From Binding States to Gene Expression." (Photo courtesy of Juhee Haam)



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The packed audience took full advantage of the question and answer time following Harris's talk. (Photo courtesy of Juhee Haam)



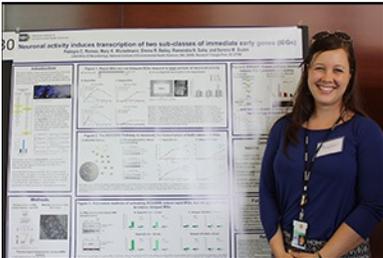
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Alexander, left, shown with her lead researcher Dudek, won an award for her poster, "Firing Properties and Immediate Early Gene Mapping in Hippocampal Area CA2." (Photo courtesy of Leah Townsend)



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Rezvani, right, and Farris, left, presented awards to featured speakers, from left, Carelli, Salinas, and Lisberger (Photo courtesy of Juhee Haam)



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Palmyra Romeo, a baccalaureate fellow in Dudek's lab, discussed her poster, "Neuronal Activity Induces Transcription of Two Sub-Classes of Immediate Early Genes" with attendees. (Photo courtesy of Leah Townsend)



Some of the organizers of the SfN event included from left, Jensen; Chintan Oza, Ph.D., a postdoctoral student at Duke; Alex Marshall, Ph.D., a postdoctoral fellow at UNC; Farris; NIEHS toxicologist Mamta Behl, Ph.D., with the National Toxicology Program; Rezvani; John Meitzen, Ph.D., assistant professor at NCSU; and Charlotte Boettiger, Ph.D., assistant professor at UNC. (Photo courtesy of Mahsa Samadi)

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