



Serotonin Club Newsletter



New Council

President:

Mark Geyer (Univ California, San Diego, USA)

Immediate Past President:

Daniel Hoyer (Novartis, Basel, Switzerland)

Vice President:

Europe: Charles Marsden (Univ Nottingham,)

USA: Terri Branchek (Lundbeck, Paramus NJ)

Secretary/Treasurer:

Sheryl Beck (Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, USA)

Councillors:

Europe:

Francesc Artigas (Inst D'Investigacions Biomediques de Barcelona, Spain)

Kevin Fone (Univ Nottingham, UK)

Stephan Hjorth (AstraZeneca, Mölndal, Sweden)

Umberto Spampinato (Bordeaux Univ, France)

USA:

Julie Hensler (Univ Texas)

Irwin Lucki (Univ Pennsylvania)

Laurence Tecott (Univ California, San Francisco)

Stephanie Watts (Michigan State Univ)

Rest of the world:

Enrique Hong (CINVESTAV-IPN, Mexico)

Mitsuhiro Yoshioka (Hokkaido Univ, Japan)

Chair Nomenclature Committee:

Graeme Martin (USA)

Loek van de Kar



A Tribute to Louis (Loek) D. Van de Kar, Ph.D. ("A rich life that enriched us all")

The worldwide neuroscience community lost a dynamic scientist, dedicated colleague, and loyal friend on September 4, 2004 when Louis "Loek" D. Van de Kar died at the age of 57 from cancer. Loek was born in Holland and raised in Israel. He came to the United States as a Fulbright Scholar and completed his graduate degree in 1978 at the University of Iowa, in the laboratory of Lucas S. Van Orden, III. Thereafter, he conducted postdoctoral studies with William F. Ganong at the University of California at San Francisco. Loek was recruited to Loyola University Chicago Medical School in 1981, where he rose through the academic ranks to become a Professor in the Department of Pharmacology and an outstanding teacher and researcher.

Loek was an exceptionally creative, talented and forthright scientist and his research contributed to furthering many areas of scientific investigation. During his productive scientific career, he was a member of various grant and fellowship review boards, held elected offices in local, national and international scientific societies, was a consultant to drug companies and was a member of the editorial boards for a number of scientific journals. Loek was

a prolific scientist with over 100 published papers in his career; he maintained a solid track record of extramural funding for the past 20 years. He received frequent invitations to present his research findings and was a Grass Foundation travelling Scientist Program lecturer. Although Loek's research findings impacted on many areas in the neurosciences, his contributions were particularly significant and insightful in furthering our understanding the neuropharmacology of serotonergic systems, including the actions of antidepressants, drugs of abuse and ovarian steroids on serotonergic signalling in the brain. Loek's enthusiasm and commitment to serotonin research, and his fostering of productive collaborations among many colleagues similarly devoted to the serotonin research, was instrumental to establishing the Center for Serotonin Disorders Research at Loyola University Chicago. Most recently, he was awarded the prestigious Javits Neuroscience Investigator Award, given to distinguished investigators who have a record of substantial contributions on the "cutting edge" of some field of neurological science. He was a true leader in the scientific community and highly regarded by his collaborators and colleagues throughout the world.

In addition to these laudable and tangible accomplishments, what mattered most to Loek was the excitement of discovery and the opportunity to instil this infectious enthusiasm for research in the students and postdoctoral fellows that he mentored and the colleagues with whom he collaborated. He trained scores of graduate and undergraduate students and postdoctoral fellows in his career and celebrated in their progress and accomplishments. His friends and colleagues, have all been fortunate to have been enriched by Loek's strength of character, wisdom, and passion for research and are thankful for the advice, support, mentorship, leadership, and friendship that he provided. Loek had a great sense of humour, a concrete sense of self and his place in the world, and a balanced perspective on it all. If he held any divine belief, it was in the sanctity of scientific pursuit. He was an equal-opportunity colleague and collaborator, taking little notice of status, and having no ulterior motives beyond the excitement of shared discovery. To know Loek was to learn lessons in life, usually by his example. He held that opinions are meant to be carefully formed, vigorously defended, objectively

discussed, and when demanded by the facts, modified or replaced; that affectations, such as wearing a suit and tie to a meeting, are silly and meaningless; that a responsible mentor is one who gives direct, unvarnished, constructive criticism; and that good science requires both an independent streak and a collaborative spirit. He exemplified these attributes and shared this with us.

Beyond the laboratory, Loek had many passionate interests that he also readily shared with friends. He was, at various times in his life, a soccer player, soccer coach, paratrooper, history buff, politics enthusiast, news junkie, wine connoisseur and "Loekdog walker" to his canine and human companions. During his courageous two year battle with cancer, he continued to be upbeat and engaging and an active and productive scientist. During this period, he published 15 papers, continued to serve as an NIH scientific reviewer and succeeded in obtaining unquestionably fundable percentile scores for two renewal applications for his ongoing NIH research projects. He left behind his beloved wife, Susan, his companion malamute, GABA, and many good friends and colleagues. He will be missed immensely, but his contributions will endure.

*George Battaglia, Ph.D.
Professor of Pharmacology
Loyola University Chicago*

Meetings of interest

Serotonin Club and the British Association of Psychopharmacology joint Symposium

'Future Prospect of the Benefit of Serotonergic Drugs to Psychopharmacology'

A joint symposia organised by the Serotonin Club and the British Association of Psychopharmacology (BAP) will be held during the Summer Meeting of the BAP (Monday 25th July 2005) in the Harrogate International Conference Centre, Harrogate, UK. The meeting has been organised by Dr Kevin Fone.

Research on serotonin has generated a wealth of therapeutic agents in the 50 years since it was discovered. Recent characterisation of different 5-HT receptors and transporter protein has led to the development of many new compounds which are currently under preclinical and clinical evaluation for a wide range of disorders. This symposium covers the progress being made.

The Role of 5-HT in Obesity and Comorbid Metabolic Disorders

The role of 5-HT in obesity, anorexia nervosa, binge eating disorder and related psychiatric conditions.

Prof. David Heal, Renasci, Nottingham, UK.

Clinical Significance of Abnormal 5-HT Metabolism in the Gut

A clinical overview of the role of abnormal 5-HT metabolism in post-infective and stress-induced irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Covering the developing role of 5HT₃ antagonists and 5HT₄ partial agonists in the treatment of IBS.

Prof. Robin Spiller, Division of Gastroenterology, University of Nottingham, UK.

The Future Contribution of Serotonergic Drugs to the Treatment of Depression and OCD

Covering SSRIs and their associated interaction with 5-HT_{1A} and 5-HT_{2C} antagonists and the potential role of 5-HT₇ receptors.

Dr Thomas Blackburn, Helicon Therapeutics Inc, New York. USA.

Serotonergic Drugs to Treat Cognitive Dysfunction

Preclinical studies on the effect of 5-HT₆ antagonists and 5-HT₄ agonists in a variety of learning tasks and the potential relevance to the treatment of deficits seen in Schizophrenia and Alzheimer's disease.

Dr Kevin Fone, Institute of Neuroscience, School of Biomedical Sciences, University of Nottingham, UK.

Further details of the meeting and registration can be found on the BAP website.

http://www.bap.org.uk/summer_meeting_2005/intro.html

New Book

Mark Berner Hansen, a member of the Serotonin Club, has published a book entitled 'Neurogastroenterology' containing information on serotonin in relation to gastrointestinal function in health and disease. To order, or obtain more details, contact the author at: mbh@dadlnet.dk

New Members

Welcome to the following new members of the Club who have joined since our last Newsletter:

Germany: Bettina Bert; **Japan:** Taku Yamaguchi.

Subscriptions

Members whose subscription becomes due during 2005 will receive notification from the new secretaries office as to when and how to pay. Members whose subscriptions are two or more years overdue will be terminated!!

Now is the time to say goodbye, Now is the time to yield a sigh

*Song at end of TV show 'Not only, but also'
Peter Cook and Dudley Moore*

This certainly is the time to say goodbye and I am also certain I will yield a sigh as a major chapter in my life ends.

In 1986 I attended a 'start up' meeting at the School of Pharmacy in London that Paul Vanhoutte had organised in order to get together scientists who were interested in forming a society that would incorporate anyone interested in serotonin research. At this meeting he suggested I became a candidate for one of the

Councillor positions (based primarily, I guess, on the fact that I had just edited a book on the neuropharmacology of serotonin) and I accepted. This was not a difficult decision as I had worked pretty continuously on serotonin from the time of my Ph.D with Gerald Curzon, through a post-doc with Erminio (Mimo) Costa at NIMH and my time with David Grahame-Smith, all major researchers on this neurotransmitter. However, I had just started to work for Astra (now AstraZeneca) and had not expected to work much more on 5-HT. Luckily I started a little 'side' work on MDMA soon after, so my serotonin work continued.

Consequent to that initial decision I have been on the Serotonin Club Council ever since the Club was formally founded in 1987. First as a councillor, then VP Europe, then President and finally Secretary/Treasurer from January 1997. I have to say taking on the last role was partly due to a guilty conscience. In 1996 Ewan Mylecharane was about to retire as the Secretary/Treasurer and he had worked tirelessly from the start to establish the Club and make it a major international society (a job he performed with considerable distinction and success). I felt I had done rather little active work for the Club during my presidency and felt I had to now put in some effort to compensate for Ewan's departure. Little did I realise what a change that decision would make to my life.

However, it is good to look back on a mostly very positive experience. I have been involved in running several very successful meetings for the Club: Rotterdam (1998); New Orleans (2000); Acapulco (2002); Porto (2004). Our membership has grown steadily (now over 600 members world wide); we have awarded a reasonable number of travel grants to young members; the Club has become an associate member of IUPHAR and our membership fees not only remain very low, but they are actually unchanged from 1996. This last success is primarily due to the move to sending out all communications (including the Newsletter) via the internet, thereby saving around £2,000 –

3,000 every year. In addition, due to the hard work of our various meetings organisers we have been able to make a profit on every meeting and this money gets added to the Club account. My being in industry has doubtless also helped, as some of my costs have been absorbed by AstraZeneca in a way not possible for anyone working in a University. I point this out primarily to alert everyone to the fact that in future the office of Secretary/Treasurer will cost more to run.

I now hand over the post to the very capable hands of Sheryl Beck and she will doubtless be writing to you soon about the Club and its future meetings and chasing you for your subscriptions. I wish her every success and I also hope she enjoys the job as much as I have.

Finally, a few thanks. Firstly to Rosemary Allen, my assistant, who some of you met in Porto. She has relieved me of much of the day to day work in running this office and without her I rather think I might have only done the job for 4 years rather than 8. Secondly to the Presidents I have worked with and also the Councillors. You may not think they have much to do, but if you saw the way our e-mail boxes fill up with discussions when we are organising the scientific content of the meetings (and this can take a year) you would change your mind.

Lastly my thanks to you, 'the members'. It has always been a pleasure getting to know you at meetings. It is the fellowship of the Club that actually makes it all worthwhile.

*A. Richard Green (Secretary/Treasurer)
AstraZeneca R&D Charnwood,
Loughborough, LE11 5RH, England
richard.green@astrazeneca.com*

Tel +44-1509-644755, Fax: +44-1509-645542