



Serotonin Club Newsletter

The Next Club Meeting **Montréal, Quebec** **Omni Hotel** **9th – 11th, July 2010**

Call for Symposia will be in June, 2009. Please start thinking now about NEW, NOVEL topics. The Scientific Program will be evaluated for exciting new research in the field of serotonin.

An international destination of choice, Montréal is easily accessed by land, water and air. Downtown is a mere 20 minutes from the airport, which handles some 200 flights daily. Visitors will find this compact island city great for walking, and can easily—and safely—explore its vibrant neighbourhoods on foot, at any time of the day or night. Montréal is also multicultural, boasting more than 80 ethnic communities, and enjoys an outstanding reputation worldwide for gourmet dining.

The Omni Hotel is centrally located in downtown. From the Quays of the Old Port to Chinatown and from Little Italy to the Plateau Mont-Royal, Montrealers love to walk. In fact, this is their favourite way of exploring the city's lively neighbourhoods, day and night. And getting around here is not only a breeze, it's also fun.

In addition, the Montreal International Jazz Festival 31st edition will be from July 1st to 11th, 2010. The gigantic summer music celebration features 11 days of non-stop

entertainment, from noon to midnight, right in the heart of downtown Montreal. Several city blocks are closed to traffic, as right of way is given exclusively to pedestrians, creating a festive and secure spot with cafés and bistros, an art gallery, street performers and a musical park for children. It's the summer celebration par excellence for people of all ages and origins, a cultural breath of fresh air, and a place for incredible musical discoveries with influence such as Jazz, Blues, Latin-Jazz, Brazilian, Cuban, African, Reggae, contemporary, electronic, and more.

Local Organizers:

Paul Albert (University of Ottawa)
Laurent Descarries (University of Montreal)
Francine Côté (CHUPS, Paris, France)

Scientific Program organized by officers and councilors of the Serotonin Club:

President: Teresa Brancheck (Teaneck, NJ)
Past President: Charles Marsden (Nottingham, UK)
Vice Presidents: Julie Hensler (San Antonio, TX)
Francesc Artigas (Barcelona, Spain)
Secretary/Treasurer: Sheryl Beck (Philadelphia, PA)

Serotonin Club Councilors 2009-2010

President:

Theresa A Branchek, Ph.D.
(2009-2010)

Immediate Past President:

Charles A Marsden, Ph.D.
(2009-2010)

Vice Presidents:

North America:

Julie G. Hensler, Ph.D.
(2009-2012)

Europe:

Frances Artigas, Ph.D.
(2007-2010)

Secretary/Treasurer:

Sheryl Beck, Ph.D.

Web Page

Rodrigo Andrade, Ph.D.

Councilors:

Europe

Kevin Fone, Ph.D.
(2009-2012)

Umberto Spampinato, M.D., Ph.D.
(2009-2012)

Trevor Sharp
(2007-2011)

Mark Millan
(2007-2010)

Councillors:

North America

Lynette C. Daws, Ph.D.
(2009-2012)

Kelly Ann Berg, Ph.D.
(2009-2012)

Kathryn A. Cunningham, Ph.D.
(2009-2012)

David E. Nichols, Ph.D.
(2009-2012)

Rest of the World

Mitsuhiro Yoshioka, M.D., Ph.D.
(2009-2012)

David Centurion, Ph.D.
(2009-2012)

Maarten van den Buuse, Ph.D.
(2007-2010)

Arthur Christopoulos, Ph.D.
(2007-2010)

New book on Serotonin

Ann G. Sjoerdsma has written a book entitled Starting with Serotonin: How a high-rolling father of drug discovery repeatedly beat the odds, Improbable Books, 2009.

This book is the biography of Ann's father, Albert Sjoerdsma, M.D., Ph.D. He worked at the NIH in the early 1950's, directing his efforts on relieving hypertension by manipulating the serotonin system. It continues to relate his life at NIH in the Experimental Therapeutics Branch of the National Heart Institute. Dr. Sjoerdsma had a tough straight-shooting personality. He worked with a number of well-known pharmacologists at NIH, including Sidney Udenfriend.

The book describes experimental therapeutics and clinical pharmacology at that time, which is much different now in how they test drugs. Back in the 50s there were no

ethics committees or the FDA. Dr. Sjoerdsma moved on to become a leader in the pharmaceutical industry designing drugs. Richard Green has written a book review that is attached to this newsletter. As Dr. Green states "Ann Sjoerdsma has achieved a fine balancing act in producing a book that should appeal to the expert and non-expert alike....Would I recommend this book to clinical pharmacologists? Undoubtedly, It details a time which has not passed but which contributed so much to our current knowledge and which can still teach us much about rational drug discovery."

SFN Dinner in Chicago

The Serotonin Club dinner will be held at the House of Blues this year. The date of the dinner will be Monday night October 19th, so mark your calendars for dinner and jazz. Details will be sent out soon.



Re-organization of the Nomenclature Committee

John Neumaier and Nick Barnes have taken over as co-chairs of the Serotonin Nomenclature committee.

First of all we want to thank Graeme Martin for his many years of service and hard work as chair of this committee!!!! And, we thank the previous members of the committee: Marlene Cohen, Richard Eglén, Manfred Gothert, Mark Hamblin, Paul Hartig, Rene Hen, Pat Humphrey, Derek Middlemiss, Ewan Mylecharane, Steve Peroutka, Pramod Saxena, Frank Yocca, and Gordon Baxter

John and Nick have put together a new committee to make some sense out of all those serotonin receptors and the single serotonin ionophore, and in addition there are polymorphisms, epigenetics, receptor

trafficking and all sorts of new exciting fundamentals that must be made clear to all of us. The committee members are:

Rodrigo Andrade
 Nick Barnes
 Joël Bockaert
 Michel Hamon
 Julie Hensler
 Katharine Herrick-Davis
 Danny Hoyer
 Graeme Martin
 Luc Maroteaux
 John Neumaier
 John Peters
 Bryan Roth
 Trevor Sharp
 Andrew Sleight
 Carlos Villalón

Other Meetings of Interest:

Society for Neuroscience 2009
 Oct. 17-21, Chicago, IL
 Abstracts due May 15th, 2009
www.sfn.org

ACNP 2009
 Dec 6th – 10th, Hollywood, FL
 Abstracts due for posters Aug. 31st.
www.acnp.org

Nineteenth Meeting of the European Neurological Society
 June 20th – 24th, Milan, Italy.

College on Problems of Drug Dependence
 June 20th – 25th, 2009
 Reno/Sparks, Nevada
<http://www.cpdd.vcu.edu>

CINP World Congress
 June 6th – 10th, 2010
 Hong Kong, China
<http://www.cinp2010.com/>

40th Annual ISPNE Conference
Modern Psychoneuroendocrinology:
Interactions with Genes, Health and
Longevity.
July 23-26, 2009
San Francisco, California.

Change in Dues:

Students who can document that they are still in their pre-doctoral training or in their first three years of postdoctoral training may pay only \$30/3 years in dues. Please have your current mentor send a letter documenting your current student status.

Regular members pay \$60/3 years.

You can pay for your dues and for the SFN dinner using a credit card at



Go to serotoninclub.org website and click on the link for Pay dues for instructions. If you are receiving this newsletter then you are already a member. We will contact you when it is time to renew. **PLEASE URGE YOUR COLLEAGUES AND STUDENTS TO JOIN!!!!** Those members whose membership is due for renewal in 2009 will be contacted at the beginning of the year. You may also send a check for \$30 or \$60 USD payable to the Serotonin Club directly to Sheryl Beck (address at end of newsletter).

Address change?

If you have changed your address send it to us now while you are thinking about it – send to: rivers@email.chop.edu

All communications with members are now carried out via the internet so if we do not have your current e-mail address you risk losing all contact with the Club

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Book review

Starting with serotonin

Ann G. Sjoedsma. Published by Improbable Books, Silver Spring, MD, USA, 2008. 617 pages, hard cover, \$27.50. ISBN-13: 978-0-615-16558-5

Writing a book about science cannot be easy, particularly specialized science such as basic pharmacology research and drug discovery. Those matters that the informed scientist finds interesting and exciting are sometimes difficult to explain clearly and simply to the lay reader, while time spent explaining the science in simple terms to the lay reader is likely to frustrate the specialist. One writer who managed this difficult balancing act with great success was the professional science writer Robert Kanigel in his fascinating book *Apprentice to Genius* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). The book was about the remarkable group of scientists working with Bernard B. Brodie at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the 1950s and in it he not only managed to review the people and their interpersonal dynamics, but also to explain their scientific exploits in a way that was not only intelligible to the non-expert but also avoided offending the expert by oversimplifying matters.

Ann Sjoedsma has also achieved a fine balancing act in producing a book that should appeal to the expert and non-expert alike and interestingly the early part of her book covers this same period at NIH with the appearance of many of the same characters. These include the brilliant but unpredictable Brodie and some of his most talented co-workers, including Sid Udenfriend, Herbert Weissbach and Parkhurst Shore. However the book is primarily a biography of the author's father Albert Sjoedsma. It therefore starts with his early life in rural Illinois and moves on to his career at the National Heart Institute (NHI), where he became Chief of the Experimental Therapeutics branch. It then reviews his later career at Merrell (and its related companies as mergers and acquisitions occurred) where he became head of research. It is a fascinating book about a blunt, sometimes rude, brilliant scientist and drug discoverer who is referred to in the book as 'the father of clinical pharmacology' and whose 'offspring' continue to hold many of the most senior clinical pharmacology posts in the USA. I would suggest that all young clinical pharmacologists should read the book to discover what clinical pharmacology can be about (but now rarely is). The Experimental Therapeutics branch of the NHI used biochemistry to examine how drugs might be acting in patients (and thereby learn more about the disease process), conducted clinical trials to test those ideas and interacted closely with preclinical scientists to try and interpret clinical data by further studies in animals. Cru-

cially, results obtained in patient populations were used to predict future therapeutic approaches and, by interacting with members of the pharmaceutical industry, investigators often administered drugs that were still in an early stage of development to test hypotheses. It was heady, fast-moving work, unencumbered by ethics committees and the FDA. Sjoedsma commented that when the FDA demanded much more control over clinical investigation in 1970 that the 'Golden Age' for his type of research had gone. Indeed his complaints at the time during a large meeting about the regulatory control exerted by the FDA over clinical pharmacology led the FDA Commissioner, who was a fellow panel member, to walk out. Progress and growth of knowledge in that 'Golden Age' was undoubtedly remarkable and it is unclear whether patient well-being was significantly more at risk during that period. What is also fascinating to see is the breadth of Sjoedsma's research: pheochromocytoma, the carcinoid syndrome, hypertension, cancer, MAO inhibitors and this is not even an exhaustive list. And his work was crucial to the development and use of Aldomet.

In 1970 Sjoedsma left the NIH and moved to industry where he had an equally illustrious career as a drug discoverer, something he was always much happier being involved with rather than the management and politics of a big company. This section of the book gives enormous insight into the problems that can be encountered working for big pharma, particularly when you are in senior management. Sjoedsma's own words make no attempt to disguise the contempt he felt for many of the senior management figures he encountered. Despite that, several highly successful drugs emerged during his watch.

In addition to the main focus of the book on clinical pharmacology and drug discovery there are several other sections that give insight into pharmacology at that time. For example there is a short but informed chapter on thalidomide and the reasons its regulatory approval was delayed in the USA. There is also a short section on Ken Melmon's fall from grace over plagiarism. Anecdotes on faked data also occur and the culprits are named; one can only assume that the author, being a lawyer as well as a journalist, feels she is on safe ground in recounting such stories.

There are weaknesses in the book; my own view is that it is too long. It is fine as an historical document but some of the detail will certainly not interest the non-specialist,

and even strains the staying power of the specialist. Sjoedsmas was also a gambler (particularly craps) and several pages are given over to explaining both roulette and craps and his method for beating the system – I happily skipped that. That having been said, I devoured the book in a little over 2 days so it certainly holds ones interest. There is a large endnote section. This is good, but the author should have been encouraged to cite papers as is done in journals not with the inclusion of first names and I cannot conceive what possessed her to quote the full experimental details of a colour test for raised 5-hydroxyindoles in urine. Her grasp of the science involved is impressive and she is meticulous in correctly attributing several major discoveries to European scientists, even when American confirmatory work followed soon thereafter. I found few errors of fact or interpretation

(spelling Nick Giarman's name as Jarmon was the only thing that stood out).

Would I recommend this book to clinical pharmacologists? Undoubtedly. It details a time which has now passed but which contributed so much to our current knowledge and which can still teach us much about rational drug discovery. Whether I would have enjoyed working for this illustrious man I am not so sure. He was rude, abrupt and irascible with many, but I am sure I would have admired him and his fine intellect and it was clear he was loyal to those whom he felt deserved his support. I also warmed to him when I read of his comment to John Fozard who asked him if he could pursue a novel research idea. Sjoedsmas was purported to have replied: 'I may kick your ass if you do, I'll certainly kick your ass if you don't'.

A. Richard Green

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