



Society for Reproductive Biology

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www.srb.org.au
ASN Events Pty Ltd
PO Box 200
Balnarring VIC 3926 Australia
Tel: +61 3 5983 2400 Fax: +61 3 5983 2223
Email: hp@asnevents.net.au

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A New Year Message From the President: *Michael Holland*

The 2nd half of 2007 was an important period for SRB. The Federal budget and the \$5 billion Higher Education Endowment Fund to aide capital works and research facilities at Universities and the much needed increase of \$222 million in Commonwealth scholarships means that tertiary education and medical research fared well.

However, the highlight of the year clearly came in September with the SRB AGM in Christchurch. As usual, SRB's meeting was held as part of a joint meeting with ESA and our other partners, so capably organised by Mike Pickford and his team of professionals at ASN. The meeting was strongly attended and hence, financially successful. This success was important as it had been quite a number of years since New Zealand last hosted SRB. It was especially pleasing to see so many graduate students and young investigators in attendance. I am particularly appreciative that Oozoa Biomedical (Sharon and David Mortimer) has agreed to sponsor 2 student awards for the next 3 years. This is highly pleasing when sponsorships for awards are on the decline. A similar thank you goes to Andrew Stammer and all at *Reproduction, Fertility and Development* for their generous sponsorship of a new plenary speaker position. Of course the ongoing support of Merck-Serono and Meat and Livestock Australia should never be forgotten. The science was uniformly of high quality and the program organised by Darryl Russell and his committee was of utmost interest. My thanks go to the local organising committee who exceeded regardless of there being no SRB representative resident in Christchurch! One future challenge is clear. The current format of the meeting is being stretched to capacity by the number of attendees wishing to present their work. This is an excellent "problem" to have and, whilst some rearranging of the program is possible, it is difficult given the needs of our companion societies. At our 2008 meeting in Melbourne, because of scheduling issues peculiar to the venue, we shall not commence until the Monday morning and will continue until the Wednesday evening rather than finishing at midday. I believe it should become policy that this is the normal time for our meeting to conclude. Other changes in the program are also being considered in order to expand our meeting by encompassing other smaller Societies with related interests.

I urge you all to strongly consider being in Hawaii in May 2008 for the 1st International Reproductive Biology Conference. A highlight will no doubt be former SRB President, Marilyn Renfree as a plenary speaker. This will be followed by the SSR Annual Meeting. It has taken many people a lot of years to get SSR, SRB and SSF to a joint meeting and so I hope as many of you will be there as possible.



Finally, we now have a new Government in Canberra with a strong rhetoric in education and some new initiatives in supporting research. It will be most interesting to see how the future plays out. I think it particularly important for our discipline. The results for reproduction in the recent NHMRC and ARC rounds were quite mixed and we need to remind Federal politicians of the many benefits which come from the very broad area of reproductive biology and the contribution it makes to both medicine and animal agriculture.

Best wishes for a prosperous 2008!

Latest News
CAROLINE GARGETT (outgoing secretary)

SRB Council

There were 3 retirees on the Council this year, Chris Scott, Membership Portfolio, Marie Pantaleon, sponsorship and myself as Secretary. Chris has done an excellent job in transferring the membership from ACTS to ASN and for following up many lapsed members. Thanks also to Marie for her work in negotiating with our key sponsors for the NIA (Merck-Serono) and MLA awards each year.

It is with great pleasure that I announce **Chris Grupen**, Sydney University, was elected unopposed as Secretary. For the first time in >10 years an election was held for the 2 vacant Ordinary Council Member positions from the 4 nominations received. I am delighted to announce that **Susan Jones**, Head of Zoology, University of Tasmania and **Larry Chamley**, University of Auckland have been elected.

Thanks also go to and to Tu'Uhe Kaitu'U-Lino and Erica Little, who have completed their terms as Australian and NZ student representatives. We welcome **Katherine Askelund** as the new NZ student representative. Congratulations Darryl Russell for the excellent scientific meeting in his first year as POC chair and thanks to Helen Nicholson for her role on the LOC. Thanks also to continuing elected and co-opted Council members for their contribution to the smooth running of the Society.

Secretariat

Council thanks ASN for their excellent service to the Society, particularly Mike Pickford and Heather Prowd. Improved services include on-line membership application and renewal, financial services as outlined by the Treasurer, regular SRB News email Bulletins and improvements to the SRB website. Further

developments will enable members to view their membership status on-line. This facility will also enable member profiling, bulletin boards and discussion groups. A future goal is to conduct web-based Council elections. We thank David Sharkey, Communications Officer for his work on the Website and formatting of SRB news bulletins.

AHMRC SRB Symposia

The Society's Symposium at the 2006 AHMRC, entitled "Inflammation and immunity: the oft-neglected challenge for reproductive health", in Melbourne on Tuesday 28th November, was an unqualified success. The symposium featured Professor Lee Nelson from Seattle and Professor Anne Croy from Ontario, as well as the Australian of the year, Professor Ian Frazer. Thanks to Mark Hedger for convening this outstanding symposium.

I am pleased to announce that Sarah Robertson and Rob Gilchrist will jointly convene the SRB Symposium at the 2008 AHMRC SRB symposium entitled "Lifestyle, environment and Female Reproduction" (details later in this newsletter).

Reproduction, Fertility and Development Editorial Advisory Committee

Chris Scott has taken on the role of SRB representative on the RFD EAC for the 2007-9 term.

Thanks

It has been a privilege to work as Secretary of a dynamic and growing Society for the last 3 years and I am thankful for this opportunity. In particular I thank Presidents, Lois Salamonsen and Michael Holland for their visionary leadership and Council members for their great teamwork.

Call for Program Suggestions

2008 SRB Annual Scientific Conference

to be held in conjunction with the ESA at the
Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre
25th – 28th of August 2008

Darryl Russell, Program Organising Committee Chair

The Program Organising Committee is now seeking suggestions from SRB Society members on potential program content for Melbourne 2008. Please communicate potential symposium topics and speakers to the POC Chair at: darryl.russell@adelaide.edu.au

2007 SRB ANNUAL CONFERENCE AWARDEES

Congratulations to the following winners of awards at our 2007 Annual Meeting in Christchurch:

▪ **Student Travel Awards:**

From Adelaide: Kelly Barnwell, Hannah Brown, Alison Care, Kylie Dunning, Denise Furness, Cadence Minge, Lachlan Moldenhauer, Rachael Nowak, Kirsty Pringle, Christine Yeo, Deirdre Zander-Fox.

From Auckland: Kathryn Askelund, Santwona Bhattu, Ambika Singh

From Brisbane: Georgia Kafer

From Dunedin: Julia Young

From Melbourne: Jin Wei Chung, Rebecca Craythorn, Vinali Dias, Jane Feleon, Melissa Gamat, Tu'uhevaha Kaitu'u-Lino, Jason Seng Hij, Brandon Menzies, Karensa Menzies, Gayathri Rajaraman, Chelsea Stoikos, Lenka Vodstrcil, Dean Whelan and Gabrielle Wilson.

From Perth: Lloyd White

From Sydney: Kiri Beilby, Natasha Czarny, Kirsten McTavish, Shalini Panwar and Laura Venuto.

▪ **Merck-Serono New Investigator Award:**

Finalists: Cathryn Hogarth, MIMR; Deirdre Zander-Fox, University of Adelaide; Gayathri Rajaraman, University of Melbourne; Ambika Singh, University of Auckland; Rachael Nowak, University of Adelaide; Georgia Kafer, CSIRO.



Winner of the 2007 Merck-Serono New Investigator Award:

Cathryn Hogarth, MIMR for her abstract entitled: "Nuclear transport at the onset of mammalian gonad sexual differentiation: Identification of cargo for importin alpha 2 in the fetal testis." Image below: Cathryn being presented with her award from the Merck-Serono representative.



▪ **MLA New Scientist Award:**

Was awarded to Kiri Beilby from Sydney University for her abstract and presentation entitled: “Enhanced pregnancy rates following low dose insemination with sex-sorted ram sperm”. Image below: Kiri being presented her award from SRB Council President, Michael Holland.



▪ **SRB-RCRH Award for Excellence in Reproductive Biology Research**

The 2007 winner of the SRB-RCRH Award is Eileen McLaughlin from the University of Newcastle.

Eileen completed her PhD in 1992 on the “Effects of Cryopreservation on Human Spermatozoa”. Following this, Eileen took up a Research Associate position at the University



of Bristol, Centre for Reproductive Medicine before attaining a Wellcome Trust Research Fellowship at the University of Bristol, Molecular Genetics Unit. Eileen then moved to Australia and is now a Senior Lecturer in Biological Sciences at the University of Newcastle where she works on early follicular

development, secondary messenger systems and mammalian sperm-egg interactions. Eileen has over 50 publications varying from IVF work in her early career as a Research Assistant to her more recent advances on the molecular mechanisms of sperm capacitation. Congratulations to a very worthy recipient.

▪ **TJ Robinson Travel Award:**

The winner of the TJ Robinson Travel Award is Dr. Katherine Morton from Sydney University. The award recognizes the Society’s Founding President, who championed strong ties with the International Congress of Animal Reproduction, which is held every 4 years. It will support her travel to the 2008 ICAR meeting in Budapest, where she will present her research findings and be the Society’s representative.

2008 SRB Annual Conference Awards

Several awards are available when you register for the 2008 SRB annual conference:

- **Student travel awards:** available to aid in attendance to the annual meeting and is open to all students who are Financial Members or who have applied to be members.
- **Merck-Serono New Investigator Award:** open to financial members enrolled as a postgraduate student or within 2 years of the award of PhD for best abstract and subsequent presentation at the annual meeting.
- **MLA Award:** available to financial members up to 10 years from award of PhD for best presentation on livestock animal species in the SRB program.
- **ANZPRA New Investigator Award:** awarded for the best presentation by an ANZPRA student member at the annual conference.
- **SRB-RCRH Award for Excellence in Reproductive Biology Research:** to recognize an emerging and excellent contributor less than 15 year post-doc who has demonstrated a substantial and sustained contribution to research in the field of Reproductive Biology.

See www.srb.org.au for more info

OTHER AWARDS ON OFFER

2008 Premier's Award for Medical Research

The Award recognises the contribution made by early-stage researchers and is an initiative of the Victorian Government and the ASMR. In conjunction, the Jack and Robert Smorgon Families Award will be presented to the research institute that has supported the work of the Premier's Award for Medical Research winner.

www.business.vic.gov.au/premiersaward



Society for Reproductive Biology

**2008 Annual Conference
Melbourne Exhibition
and Convention Centre**

25th – 28th of August 2008

www.esa-srb.org.au

Important Dates

16th June 2008 – Early Bird Registration and Abstract Submission Closes

SRB Membership for 2008 is due 31.12.07

Support the SRB and reap the benefits of membership in Australia and New Zealand's premier society for scientific research in reproductive biology

Postgraduate Student Rep Report Hannah Brown (Aust.)

The SRB workshop this year was with Sharon Mortimer, Editor in Chief from Reproduction, Fertility and Development. This year's student lunch was with Prof. Marty Matzuk and was highly successful. Marty shared his invaluable advice with the students regarding finding a post-doc position and being a successful post-doctoral researcher.

Again, student feedback included an interest in fostering a mentoring program between senior researchers and students of the SRB. A number of excellent suggestions have been proposed and will be discussed at the next committee meeting.

The student/supervisor mixer, held at Annie's Wine Bar, was a huge success this year with another sell-out event. As had been suggested in past years, a less formal venue and program was selected and this allowed for significant interaction (dancing) between students and supervisors late into the night!

A larger venue will be considered in 2008 in Melbourne, as a significant number of people missed the event due to size constraints.

Student meeting: The annual student meeting provides the students with an opportunity to voice their opinions and to give feedback about the SRB and the scientific meeting. It is also when the SRB travel grants are distributed. This year the society was very generous with the travel grants, for which the students were very grateful.

There were a number of issues discussed at the meeting. These included:

Introduction of the new NZ Student Rep:



Kathryn Askelund from the University of Auckland, Department of Obs & Gyn. Kathryn is supervised by Larry Chamley and is looking at the causes and consequences of trophoblast deportation during human pregnancy.

Election of the new Aust. Student Rep:

Hannah Brown was elected the new Australian Student Rep. Hannah is from the University of Adelaide (Research Centre for Reproductive Health). She works under the supervision of Darryl Russell on the development and function of the lymphatic vasculature in the ovary.

Introduction of a poster session/length of oral presentations:

Students agreed that it was potentially necessary to re-introduce a poster session with the growing size of the annual SRB meeting. They also agreed that a presentation of 10 minutes including questions was very short and that they would prefer a poster session to accommodate more presentations, rather than a reduction in oral presentation length. Students proposed that the poster session be a stand-alone session to encourage the best possible audience turn out and that either breakfast (for a breakfast poster session) or drinks at the end of the day be supplied. Students also supported the council's decision that it not be a student poster session but that post-doc researchers and senior researchers will equally be included in the session.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the two out-going student reps, Tu'uhe and Erica for the significant contributions that they made during their terms with the SRB. If students have any queries or suggestions, please feel free to contact Hannah hannah.brown@adelaide.edu.au or Kathryn k.askelund@auckland.ac.nz at any time.

Membership

Chris Scott (outgoing council)

The membership of the SRB is growing. Our numbers have increased steadily in recent years and we now have 249 financial members (including Life Members), which compares favorably with last year (214 members) and 2003 (my oldest record), when we had 182 members. This is due to a great increase in applications for membership compared with recent years as well as a great increase in lapsed (unfinancial) members who have become financial again. Thanks are due here to the great work of the membership sub-committee for chasing up lapsed members and actively recruiting new members.

Current membership of the Society will expire on 31st December. Please see the advertisement on the previous page to join or renew online before this date so that your membership does not lapse.

This is my last membership report, since my term on the SRB Council has ended. The baton for membership has passed to Lynette Kilpatrick. Please feel free to contact her (lynette.kilpatrick@princehenrys.org) if you have any questions about membership of SRB.

Publicity Report **Sarah Meachem**

SRB conference media campaign: One interview was conducted this year with Prof. Louis Guillett, reported by Amanda Morrall from the Christchurch Press (see press release below). Thank you to Darryl Russell from the Program Organising Committee for a fantastic job in helping to dissect out potential talent and stories/hot topics for me to follow up.

The low level of media coverage was quite disappointing this year and was due in part to limited access to media officers to write press releases. Communications offices that were organised to help in New Zealand and Melbourne had staff resign and thus this significantly impacted the media campaign. Similarly, Christchurch is a small town with only one media outlet which limits media coverage. Key elements to grab the attention of the NZ media was not just to have a great story, great talent but someone that put the stories into a local context (ie: impact on people that live in Christchurch). We certainly had great stories and great talent. Sue James from MIMR was gracious and wrote the press release with the material supplied. If anyone has expertise in this area and would like to volunteer their services, please feel free to contact me on sarah.meachem@princehenrys.org.

MEDIA RELEASE **Monday 3rd September 2007,** **Christchurch Convention Centre** **Sex, Global Warming & Environmental** **Pollution**

For over a century, wildlife and other animals have been used to predict the potential effects of changes in the environment on human health.

Studies examining the reproductive biology of a wide range of species from fish to mammals, indicates that exposure to elevated environmental temperature or common environmental pollutants (some pesticides, plasticizers, industrial waste products, chemical stabilizers, pharmaceuticals) can adversely affect the reproductive system.

Prof Louis Guillett, University of Florida, will show that exposure of female rats or alligators either during pregnancy or shortly after birth to pollutants which mimic the hormone estrogen can adversely affect fertility in later life. This suggests that this may be common across a wide range of the female species. A similar response is seen in the daughters of women treated with the drug diethylstilbestrol during pregnancy.

Elevated temperature and some natural plant compounds (phytoestrogens), which are used as dietary supplements, produce similar effects.

Dr Alex Quinn, University of Canberra, has studied the impact of elevated environmental temperature on sex determination in the Australian central bearded dragon lizard. He has shown that increased temperatures can turn genetic males into females showing environmental temperature can override genetics in determining the sex of lizards.

Environmental temperature and pollutants have a direct impact on fertility and sex determination in animals. The implications for human fertility remain uncertain.

These studies will be presented at the Society of Reproductive Biology meeting in Christchurch, New Zealand, September 3 – 5, 2007.



www.ahmrcongress.org.au/

The Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR) is holding its bi-annual Australian Health and Medical Research Congress (AHMRC) in Brisbane, 16-21 Nov, 2008. The organising committee is currently calling for expressions of interest from societies or organisations who would like to be involved in contributing to the program for the 2008 meeting. There are several ways to be involved in the AHMRC, as a society conducting their annual scientific meeting, by contributing to a section of the program only, as a sponsor or supporter, or as a delegate. If you would like to out more details on any level of involvement please contact ASN on mo@asnevents.net.au.

SUBMISSIONS TO THIS NEWSLETTER

All SRB members are invited and encouraged to submit articles, news items, awards, conference announcements or other associated information for this newsletter to lynette.kilpatrick@princehenrys.org anytime. The newsletters are published bi-annually.

UPCOMING Conferences



1st World Congress on Reproductive Biology
Sheraton Keauhou Bay Spa & Resort
Kailua-Kona, Hawaii
May 24-26, 2008
www.oardc.ohio-state.edu/wcrb



16th International Congress on Animal
Reproduction
Budapest, Hungary.
July 13-17, 2008
www.icar2008.org