

The 2007 ARO MidWinter Meeting



Bob Shannon, Ph.D.
2006-2007 ARO President

The 30th annual MidWinter Meeting of the Association for Research in Otolaryngology took place on February 10-15, 2007 in Denver. The Hyatt Regency Hotel was a beautiful site with great facilities for the meeting. The hotel was only one year old and the guest rooms were luxurious. The ballroom used for posters and exhibits was spacious and allowed plenty of space for the usual scientific and social discussions in the hallways. The internet café area appeared to work well; the tables were always full with people checking their e-mail and engaging in round-table discussions with collaborators. As always, we owe a large debt of gratitude to Darla Dobson and Lisa Astorga and their associates from Talley Management for the hard work they put in to make the annual meeting a success.

We were curious about how the ARO membership would feel about the first meeting away from the waterfront and away from a warm-weather location. We had 1410 attendees, which is down slightly from previous years, so I guess there are a few weather wimps among the membership. It appears that ARO members who did attend didn't notice the outside temperature because the science was hot and heavy inside. There was a diverse selection of restaurants within a cold but short walk of the hotel. Some people took advantage of the location to squeeze in a little skiing before or after the meeting.

There were 976 abstracts presented, a number that has been holding steady (+/- 5%) for about 8 years and has been relatively unaffected by terrorists, hurricanes, and other impediments to travel. There were 806 posters and 170 podium presentations, including 11 special symposia and workshops.

John Middlebrooks and the Program Organizing Committee once again did a wonderful job at sorting the diverse abstracts into coherent sessions and distributing them throughout the week in a manner that minimized conflicts and overlapping sessions. One of the highlights of the meeting is always the high-quality Symposia and Workshops. We would like to thank all the members who proposed and organized symposia, which improve the intellectual experience and scientific quality of the meeting.

Eric Young was the 2007 recipient of the ARO Award of Merit. This award honors Eric for his impressive body of work in auditory physiology. Along with the obligatory embarrassing pictures of his youth on a remote Nevada ranch and a review of

his early career, Eric presented an impressive overview of decades of work on the dorsal cochlear nucleus. Unraveling the complex organization and function of this structure took the patience of a saint, the brilliance of one of the best physiological minds of our time, and the persistence of a bulldog. After that, serving as the first Editor-in-Chief of JARO may have seemed easy. Eric remains a role model as a scientist and public citizen for his research and his service to the ARO.

Thanks to all those members who filled out the post-meeting questionnaire which gives the ARO Council feedback on the aspects of the meeting that you particularly enjoyed or disliked. The ARO is a member-driven organization and it is only as strong as the member participation. We are always looking for people to step forward to volunteer for ARO committees and to propose Symposia and Workshops for future meetings.

We hope the ARO membership enjoys meeting in different locations as we search for a more permanent home for the meeting. As we change locations it is more important that ever to fill out the post-meeting questionnaire to give council your opinions on the different meeting locations and facilities. Next year we head for the warmer climate of the southwestern desert in Phoenix, February 16-21, 2008. In 2009 we will be back in Baltimore at the Marriott Waterfront. Wherever we meet we know we'll find an annual re-acquaintance with old friends and colleagues, and the intellectual rush that comes from a good scientific meeting.



Eric Young received the 2007 Award of Merit. Pictured are (L to R): Eric Young, Mrs. Young, Murray Sachs, Jay Goldberg, Israel Nelken. Photos by D. Lim

Letter from the Editor



Peter A. Santi, Ph.D.
ARO Editor

The ARO will now publish two newsletters each year. This new spring newsletter will summarize events that occurred at 2007 midwinter meeting, and the fall newsletter will focus on the 2008 midwinter meeting.

This newsletter provides you with highlights from the 2007 meeting, award announcements, a JARO update, results from the post meeting questionnaire, and discussions on peer review at the NIH. This year is the second time that the MidWinter Meeting has been held in a cold location and the first time that it has been in Denver, Colorado. Many members thought that the meeting and venue were a great success, but strong support was heard for having the meeting in a warm location. Next year, hopefully their wishes for more moderate temperatures will come true, as the meeting is being held in Phoenix, Arizona. As another first, the meeting will occur in a convention center instead of a hotel..

I would like to thank all of the contributors to the newsletter and Darla Dobson for her help in producing this newsletter. In addition, I thank ARO members and the Council for letting me serve as their Editor and for making the ARO an outstanding scientific organization for hearing and other communication disorders research.



The Distinguished Public Service Award was awarded to Representative Diana DeGette from Colorado. She has been one of the strong supporters of biomedical research, health care and stem cell research. Due to her obligation at the Congress, she was not able to receive the award in person, but it was received by the Chief of Staff of her Denver office, Gregory Diamond.

The photo shows the poster of representative DeGette with Bob Shannon, Jim Battey, Gregory Diamond and Herman Jenkins (from left to right). Photo by D. Lim

Karina Cramer Receives the Burt Evans Young Investigator Award

Matthew W. Kelley, MS, Ph.D.

It is a pleasure to present the Burt Evans Young Investigator Award to Karina Cramer, Ph.D.. This award is named for Dr. Burt Evans, a brilliant auditory researcher whose life was tragically cut short by amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. She received her Ph.D. from Cal. Tech. working in the laboratory of David Van Essen. She then did post-doctoral research at both M.I.T. with Mriganka Sur and at the University of Washington with Ed Rubel. In 2000 she became a Research Assistant Professor at the University of Washington and then in 2002 she became an Assistant Professor at the University of California at Irvine, a position she still holds.



Dr. Karina Cramer

Throughout her career, while the focus of her research interests have moved from the neuromuscular junction to the visual system to the auditory system, the quality of her research has consistently remained at the highest level. During her time in Ed Rubel's laboratory, she carried out an elegant series of experiments to examine the embryonic origins of auditory brain-stem nuclei in the chick hindbrain. These studies identified the specific rhombomeres within the developing hindbrain that contribute cells to different auditory brain-stem nuclei, a crucial first step in beginning to understand the development of these structures.

In her own laboratory, she has expanded on these initial findings by examining the role of Eph family proteins in the development of tonotopic organization and axon growth within different auditory nuclei. Since establishing her laboratory at Irvine, she has generated an impressive nine publications, all in leading journals, and most recently, she organized a very successful symposium at the 2007 ARO Mid-winter Meeting on the development of the auditory and vestibular hindbrain. She has clearly established herself as one of the leaders in the field of development of the auditory hindbrain and all indications are that she will continue to be one of the pioneers in that field for many years to come.

In recognition of her past accomplishments and future potential, the National Organization for Hearing Research Foundation is pleased to present Karina Cramer with the Burt Evans Young Investigator Award for 2007.

Long Range Planning Committee Report: The Meeting Venue Remains a Topic of Discussion



Robin L. Davis, Ph.D.
Chair, Long Range Planning Committee

By all measures, the 2007 MidWinter Meeting held in Denver was a success, but according to our membership there is still room for improvement. Of the 462 respondents to the post-meeting questionnaire, 69% categorized the meeting as outstanding-to-excellent. As in previous years, the highest rated scientific content was found in the poster sessions (67% of responses in the outstanding and excellent categories) receiving many laudatory comments from the members. However, only 50% of the membership ranked the scientific content of the podium sessions in the top two categories, and many commented on the lack of cutting-edge data and poor adherence to the published time schedule. The close proximity of the two sessions that allowed easy access to both was frequently mentioned as a positive point. The Presidential lecture also received significant praise with most respondents expressing enthusiasm for bringing in speakers from other fields to present work on related topics. Although a number of respondents left this question unanswered, 42% of the total ranked this event in the outstanding and excellent categories; re-calculating the score based upon only those who expressed an opinion improved the ranking to 62%.

Not surprisingly, the location of the meeting provoked the greatest number of comments, both positive and negative. Many respondents mentioned the high quality of the hotel, proximity to restaurants, and city atmosphere as positives; an equally vocal contingent was dissatisfied with the cold weather, potential for travel delays, distance from the east coast, and lack of sand and sun. Many of the beach enthusiasts expressed an interest in returning to Florida, some members did not attend because of the location, whereas others appear to be satisfied with Phoenix as the site for the 2008 MidWinter Meeting. To resolve this dilemma over the long term, the membership was polled for alternative dates to hold the meeting. A high percentage of respondents (68%) expressed a preference for changing the meeting date. Most preferred March (54.4%), followed by April (51.1%) and May (41.4%), keeping in mind that members were encouraged to select more than one month of the year that would be convenient for them.

From discussions held last year, the Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) determined that the future of ARO would be best served by encouraging student, postdoctoral fellow, and resident input into the structure and content of the MidWinter Meetings. This year, the Council implemented the first step of the plan by holding a student social on the first night of the meeting. Based upon the positive comments that were made by those who attended the social, significant progress was made toward achieving the goal of fostering communication and mentorship between students. The next planned step is to form a student advisory committee and 29% of the respondents expressed an interest in participating in this capacity. Nonetheless, there is still a need for improvement. Of the 97 people that ranked the student social, most rated it only as good or above. Numerous comments expressed disappointment with

the food that was served, which detracted from the overall quality of the experience. Thus, the event was a qualified success, but more effort must be expended to truly engage student involvement.

Another challenge identified by both the membership and the LRPC is to retain the informality of the MidWinter meeting despite its growth in size. Hand-in-hand with selecting the most appropriate location, we must also work to preserve and increase the informal scientific discussions between our members that make the meeting invaluable. To encourage these interactions, special interest socials will be rolled out at the meeting in Phoenix next year. These all-inclusive Saturday evening socials will be centered on broad topics and hosted by senior ARO members. We encourage everyone to attend, meet new colleagues, and share their research.



Dr. Shannon was presented a certificate of appreciation for his service as the 2006-2007 ARO President. Pictured are (L to R): Steven Rauch, Bob Shannon. Photo by D. Lim



Officers of the Korean-American Otolaryngology Society, Steven Juhn (President), Timothy Jung (General Secretary), with four 2007 ARO Travel Award winners, including Jong-Yang Kim, MD, You-Hyun Kim, MD, Yongjin Yoon, PhD, Kyu-Up Lee, MD (from left to right). Photo by D. Lim

JARO Update



Ruth Anne Eatock, Ph.D.
JARO Editor-in-Chief

The past year has been a transitional one at the Journal of the Association for Research in Otolaryngology (JARO). I took over from Eric Young as Editor, and would like to thank

Eric and his editorial assistant, Anita Tilotta, for their gracious help during this process. We owe Eric thanks for his success in shepherding our young journal into its present position as a recognized home for substantive research on mechanisms underlying diverse otolaryngology-related questions. Appreciation is also due to Arthur Popper and Gerald Popelka, who recently stepped down as co-chairs of the Publication Committee, for their many years of work in support of JARO. For 2005, the most recent year for which ISI data are available, JARO maintained its top-ranking impact factor among otolaryngology journals (1st among 29) and improved its standing relative to all neuroscience journals (81 in 200).

Recent statistics continue to be encouraging: the numbers of downloaded papers and submissions both increased substantially in 2006 relative to 2005. To meet the demand and avoid backlogs, we are on track to publish significantly more articles this year. The Publications Committee is exploring different ways in which to expand the journal to meet demand.

Questions have come up about electronic access: Currently, articles are published electronically as they become ready in the "Online First" section of the Springer website for the JARO

(<http://www.springerlink.com/content/1438-7573/>, or from the link on the ARO website, <http://www.aro.org/>), then bundled into four print issues per year. ARO members get free electronic access to pdfs in addition to the printed issues. In addition, Springer has agreed to make the electronic versions freely available to all after 12 months.

Last fall, we began using Editorial Manager, an on-line system for the submission and tracking of manuscripts (<http://www.editorialmanager.com/jaro/>). This significantly streamlines the review process - we have substantially reduced the time from submission to first decision - and allows authors to track their papers through the review process. With feedback from editors, reviewers and authors, we are adapting the web site to our needs by customizing the default software.

I would like to thank all of the Journal's Associate Editors for their hard work during this transitional year. In February, Matthew Holley, Gary Housley, Mario Ruggero, and Tom Yin retired from their three-year tours of duty, and we are grateful for their excellent service. We are pleased to be joined by the following new Associate Editors: Didier Dulon (Bordeaux), Jonathan Gale (London), Philip Joris (Leuven), and Elizabeth Olson (New York).

Finally, thanks to ARO members for continuing to support the journal with their membership and their submissions.

Gerald Popelka and Art Popper Receive a Certificate of Appreciation as Publication Co-Chairs



President Bob Shannon presented certificates of appreciation to Gerald Popelka and Art Popper for their service as Publication Committee Co-Chairs. Pictured are (L to R): Bob Shannon, Gerald Popelka, Art Popper. Photo by D. Lim

NIH Center for Scientific Review – Open House Workshop: Neuroscience, March 2, 2007

Paul A. Fuchs, PhD and Donata Oertel, PhD

On March 2, 2007, the Center for Scientific Review held the first of a series of one-day Open Houses to air issues regarding NIH Study Sections. The meeting was attended by NIH staff, chairs of study sections, representatives of professional organizations, and interested members of the public (i.e., other neuroscientists), ~ 200 people.

The morning consisted of presentations from NIH/CSR staff.

Dr. E. Zerhouni, Director of NIH, made introductory comments, pointing out that the reviewing load for NIH had increased dramatically: in 1996 NIH reviewed 24,000 proposals, in 2006 46,000 proposals.

Dr. Toni Scarpa, Director of the Center for Scientific Review, followed with a rationale for the meeting. The large increase in reviewing load led to a major rearrangement of study sections in 1998. There has been an effort to reduce the number of study sections whose research is funded through a single institute ("captive study sections") to assure that scientific areas are equally competitive. The continued growth in numbers of applications has led to the need for continued monitoring of the loads and scientific representation of individual study sections. A load of 80-100 grants per cycle is considered reasonable. New study sections are added in areas of continued growth.

Study sections in the neurosciences fall mainly into the following 'initial review groups' (IRGs):

BDCN (Brain Disorders and Clinical Neuroscience)
IFCN (Integrative, Functional and Cognitive Neuroscience)
MDCN (Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Neuroscience)
BDPE (Biology and Diseases of the Posterior Eye)

In spite of the fact that discussion of "process" was discouraged, there was considerable discussion of problems associated with the clustering of high scores. It was pointed out by Eve Marder (President, Society for Neuroscience) that when many high scores are clustered near the top, the range becomes so compressed that scores do not necessarily reflect the ranking of grants by members of study sections. Some study sections are better at dealing with these difficulties than are others, and explicit ranking was suggested as an alternative method by Dr. Marder.

For the afternoon, participants in the meeting were placed into five "break out groups" to discuss two questions:

1. Is the science of your discipline, in its present state, appropriately evaluated within the current study section alignment? Suggestions?
2. What will be the most important questions and/or enabling technologies you see forthcoming within the science of your discipline in the next 10 years?

Many of the groups had common answers.

1a) Study sections that are too focused may not appreciate the significance of research in the field. Study sections commonly grapple with the problem that interdisciplinary research requires broad disciplinary representation, but there is also a need for focused expertise. These difficulties are reflected in the growth of numbers of *ad hoc* reviewers in study sections, who significantly outnumber regular members in general.

1b) Study sections tend to over-emphasize "hypothesis-driven" research at the expense of "discovery-based" (descriptive) research. As a result valuable studies (molecular structure, anatomy, molecular arrays) are sometimes underrated.

2) Fields of increasing importance include imaging at many levels, computer modeling, large-scale research that is performed in teams, 'classical' anatomy, physiology and behavior to evaluate transgenic models.

Dr. Scarpa ended the meeting with comments on future trends.

a) NIH will probably explore the possibility of shortening grant proposals.

b) To make reviewing more attractive there is discussion of extending the funding period of grants of reviewers in proportion to reviewing efforts.

c) To allow the participation of those who cannot travel, reviewing is already sometimes handled by telephone and may eventually move toward web-based media.



Attendees gathered in the poster hall during the Welcome Reception sponsored by Springer.

ARO Council

Photo by D. Lim



Pictured are: (L to R): John Middlebrooks, Councilor; Steven Rauch, Secretary / Treasurer; Karen Avraham, International Committee Chair; Peter Santi, Editor; Karen Steel, Councilor; Robert Shannon, Past President; Paul Fuchs, President Elect; Ashley Wackym, President; Laurel Carney, Councilor; Lloyd Minor, Past President; David Lim, Historian

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ARO 2007 Council meeting work session. Photo by D. Lim