

From the Director

Welcome back from what I hope was a relaxing and invigorating summer holiday.

As a Centre we're really looking forward to 2011 as a year of further growth and development. As a result of the end-of-year Retreat for principal investigators, we have accumulated many new ideas and suggestions for strengthening the work of the Centre. The Management Committee will be meeting soon to set the action plan for some of the key strategic areas, such as identifying and promoting core strengths, improving internal communication and infrastructure, expanding the funding base, and improving the Centre's recognition locally, nationally and internationally. Meanwhile, take special note for now that we are initiating a new seminar series, and we will be officially launching the BPU, which represents the culmination of an immense amount of work by many Centre members, and the commencement of a new phase of neuroscience animal research at Otago.

The upcoming Brain Day is an increasingly notable event, and BHRC members are speaking not only in Dunedin but elsewhere in the South Island as well. Overall we are definitely on a rising phase of research endeavour and public profile. But we need to continue to increase the momentum in the coming year. And with numerous HRC and Marsden grants having been recently submitted, it's certainly an exciting time. Keep up the great work!

Cliff Abraham, Director

A Visit from Professor Sarah Dunlop

Last week the BHRC sponsored a visit from Professor Sarah Dunlop, President of ANS. Her morning seminar *Knife Edge, Cutting Edge: Starting and Maintaining a Research Career*, was a stimulating talk that was well attended and generated good discussions. Perhaps because no senior research staff was allowed?

In the afternoon, Prof Dunlop spoke about her research on rehabilitation strategies for spinal cord injury: *Taking a step: Translating Basic Science to Clinical Trials for Spinal Cord Injury*. This was followed by a discussion about how the Australian Neuroscience Society might engage more with NZ neuroscientists, and if each could contribute more to the other's activities. The name of the Society will be reviewed in the coming year.

Identifier Update



After consultation with the University Marketing Department, we have settled on an identifier that is more in keeping with the university's requirements for formal publications. Contact Jill Leichter if you need the BHRC Identifier in any format for your posters or PowerPoint presentations.

ANS Meeting

The recent ANS meeting in Auckland was a great success, with the ~830 registrants being well over even the most optimistic estimates. The BHRC co-sponsored one of the meeting's symposia, *Neuromodulators, Plasticity and Behaviour: Dopamine Made Me Do It*. Dr John Reynolds was the organiser.

A highlight of the meeting was the Australasian final of the Brain Bee. For the first year, the two New Zealand finalists completely overwhelmed their Australian counterparts. Moreover, the two NZers, Kerstin MeEwan from Riccarton High School (S.I.) and Rachael Wiltshire from Samuel Marsden Collegiate School (N.I.), had the most exciting sudden death overtime session before they could finally be separated, with Rachael ultimately winning the prize and a trip to the FENS meeting in Florence in July as the NZ representative to the international Brain Bee final. Kerstin, however, was a fantastic South Island representative, and came home with some excellent prizes.

Congratulations should be given on the successful meeting to the Centre members who served on the Local Organising Committee: Steve Kerr, John Reynolds, Christine Jasoni and Cliff Abraham. Congratulations also to the nine students who were awarded BHRC travel grants for the meeting. And many thanks to the Neurological Foundation of NZ, which provided generous sponsorship to support student travel to the meeting.

Mark your Calendars!

Peter Mombaerts February 7, 1 pm, Adams Room: Olfaction Targeted

John Bekkers February 9, 1 pm, Hercus D'Ath Lecture Theatre: Cortical circuits for processing the sense of smell

Tony West, Thursday 10th February, 12.00-1.00 pm, St David Lecture Theatre

Associate Professor Anthony West, from the Department of Neuroscience at the Chicago Medical School, will hold a free public lecture at St David Lecture Theatre this Thursday. His talk, *Discovering Novel Treatments for Parkinson's Disease*, will look at new atypical approaches that hold promise for treatment of the neurological symptoms of Parkinson's. Dr. West's visit is sponsored by the Neurological Foundation of New Zealand and the BHRC.

The BHRC Young Investigator Lecture

This is a key event in our new lecture series. The lecture will be given annually by one of the Centre's rising stars, i.e. an early career researcher who has forged an excellent research profile. We are pleased to announce that **Dr Andrew Clarkson** will give the inaugural Young Investigator Lecture, entitled *The Stroked Brain: Finding Protectors and Repairers* in which he will review his recent research and discuss the road ahead. The lecture will be held at 4 pm, 3 March in the Barnett Theatre.

Brain Day, Saturday, 19 March

In conjunction with the Dana Foundation, the Neurological Foundation of New Zealand and Brain Awareness Week, our annual Brain Day will be held at the Castle Lecture Theatre Complex on 19 March, 10.30 am – 4.00 pm. Dr Ruth Empson is once again

the local organiser. The day will feature public lectures by four BHRC researchers, displays of anatomical models from the medical school and an EEG station to show people how brain waves are measured. Featured speakers are:

11.00 am: **Dr Liana Machado: Maintaining Control over Visual Orienting: AgeRelated Changes and Potential Remedies**

12.15 pm: **Dr Graeme Hammond-Tooke: Stimulating the Brain with Electricity: From Electric Rays to Magnetic Coils**

1.30 pm: **Dr Andrew Clarkson: UnderstandingHow the Brain can be Repaired after a Stroke**

2.45 pm: **Dr Louise Parr-Brownlie: Shedding Light on Parkinson's Disease**

Other Centre members will be speaking during Brain Awareness Week at centres around the country.

Volunteers needed for Brain Day

Attention Students and Post-docs! Volunteer to help out on Brain Day, an important opportunity for you to communicate all things Brain to the public. You will get to wear a cool t-shirt (and you get points with your supervisor and the BHRC).

Please contact Dr Ruth Empson to volunteer (ruth.empson@stonebow.otago.ac.nz).

Congratulations!

Beulah Leitch has been promoted to Senior Lecturer.

Steve Kerr has been promoted to Associate Professor.

Associate Professor Dorothy Oorschot, in collaboration with researchers from the University of Auckland, recently published a paper investigating nerve cell loss in regions of the brain associated with Huntington's disease in the prestigious journal *Brain*.

