

SRF

Society for Reproduction and Fertility

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Newsletter No. 181

January 2003

From the General Secretary

Dear Member

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2003. I hope you had a good festive season, and are looking forward to the year ahead.

Looking back to the end of 2002 – what a conference! Those of you who couldn't make it to Tours missed a treat. Congratulations must go to John Williams and his team for putting together a fantastic scientific programme and a superb social event. The logistics of conference organisation are never easy, but John and his colleagues coped very well indeed. However, changes are afoot for the future and our programme secretary, Tony Michael, will tell you a little more about this later in the Newsletter.

Do you have any news, views or opinions that you would like to share with your colleagues? Contributions for the Newsletter from members are always welcome. If you have any material you would like included please do not hesitate to contact me.



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Joint SRF/SFEF/DGRM/PVL Winter Conference

Université François Rabelais, Tours, France, Friday 20th and Saturday 21st December 2002

The 2002 Winter Meeting, held jointly with French SFEF, the German DGRM and the Dutch PVL was held in the Medical Faculty of the historic University of Tours. The city looked wonderful all dressed for Christmas, and I know some delegates took advantage of the Christmas market for some excellent last minute present shopping.

A thought provoking symposium was held on the Friday with talks by Keith Jones, Bernard Maro, Laurent Meijer, Jonathon Pines and Michael Primig all reviewing knowledge of the cell cycle and its effects at various stages of reproduction. Then came free communications and posters, before the evening's entertainment. Who would have expected that on arriving at the ancient Prieuré St Cosme diners would be serenaded(?) by the Medical Faculty Brass Band. What a performance! Not only that, after dinner and generous quantities of Touraine wine they returned and did it all again! Fantastic. And to think some people went back on the early bus to go to a French Karaoke bar!

On the Saturday, we returned to the serious side of science. David Albertini presented an interesting and thought provoking Hammond Lecture about how the oocyte and granulosa cells integrate the various processes involved in folliculogenesis – I will never look at a corkscrew in quite the same way again!

Jean-Paul Renard closed the meeting by presenting the Palmer Lecture, a timely review of important observations relating to the cellular status of donor and recipient cells in cloning experiments and how these can affect the success of cloning attempts and viability of subsequent offspring.



Fertility 2003, Aberdeen Scotland 13-17 July 2003

Conference Organiser: Dr Paul Fowler,
University of Aberdeen

By now, I hope you are all aware that our forthcoming summer conference will be held jointly with the British Fertility Society and the British Andrology Society in Aberdeen, this July. The deadline for receipt of abstracts **HAS CHANGED TO 14TH FEBRUARY 2003**, and we are able to accept electronically submitted abstracts for this conference. Please make sure you submit your abstract on time so as not to miss out. The programme will include three symposia: "Reproductive Research in the 21st Century", "Mechanisms of Fetal Programming" and "Reproductive Consequences of Ageing". There will also be a number of pre-conference workshops which will provide something of interest to everyone. Further information is included with this mailing, or available from Victoria Withy, Bioscientifica Ltd., 16 The Courtyard, Woodlands, Bradley Stoke, Bristol BS32 4NQ. Tel: +44 (0)1454 642210 Fax: +44(0)1454 642222 Email: Fertility2003@endocrinology.org Web: www.fertility2003.com

Students or postdoctoral scientists who wish to have their abstract submitted for either the SRF student prize or the Walpole lecture, should check the eligibility criteria on the SRF website (www.srf-reproduction.org/society) and ensure that a **separate copy of their abstract is emailed to the programme secretary (t.michael@rfc.ucl.ac.uk) by the submission deadline.**

SRF Conferences – The Way Forward

At last year's AGM in Leeds, I undertook to consult SRF members regarding potential changes to SRF conferences designed to increase delegate and abstract numbers. Regrettably, restrictions on our current web facilities have prevented the proposed e-survey of Society members using the SRF e-mail list. Hence, I now write to outline proposals developed by the SRF Meetings Committee and formally endorsed for implementation by the elected members of SRF Council. We hope that these suggestions will meet with your approval, but please feel free to contact me directly with any feedback (t.michael@rfc.ucl.ac.uk).

Since 1997, the numbers of abstracts submitted to the SRF's annual conferences and to the joint European winter meetings has been declining by around 15% per annum. This trend has been paralleled in delegate numbers; less than 200 delegates were present on any one day at last year's annual conference in Leeds, and less than 100 delegates attended the pre-Christmas conference in Tours (notwithstanding the fact that the latter conference was a joint meeting of 4 societies with a combined membership in excess of 1200).

The Meetings Committee has considered a number of factors contributing to the progressive decline in support for SRF conferences. While recognising that many of these factors (*e.g.* decreased availability of funds to support conference attendance) are beyond our influence, the Meetings Committee has reached 4 major conclusions:

- (1) that it is no longer viable, scientifically or financially, for SRF to participate in more than one conference in any given year
- (2) that, for the foreseeable future, stand-alone SRF conferences are likely to attract too few delegates to be scientifically or financially successful
- (3) that early July and late December are not the best times to organise conferences
- (4) that all future conferences attended by SRF members should be organised with increased use of electronic communication (*e.g.* on-line abstract submission and processing) by an approved Professional Conference Organiser.

In November, the Meetings Committee made the following recommendations to SRF Council, all of which were approved *nem con*:

- that, for the foreseeable future, all SRF conferences be organised as joint meetings with sister learned societies from the UK and/or continental Europe
- that such meetings be organised on a federative basis with a clear retention of identity for each partner society (*e.g.* by inclusion of the Society's eponymous lectures and prize sessions)
- that these joint meetings always be held at the same time of year (March/April – during the Easter vacation) so that these dates become a regular fixture in the diaries of SRF members with a fixed abstract deadline
- that the preferred model would be an alternating pattern of joint UK and joint pan-European meetings.

At present, the SRF is to be a partner in joint conferences with sister UK societies (the BAS and BFS) in 2003 and 2005. Discussions are still ongoing with the officers of the European sister societies, but broad agreement in principle was reached at an informal meeting of interested parties in Tours in December and SRF hopes to participate in joint European meetings in 2004 and 2006. (At present, the SRF has been invited to co-organise joint European conferences in Ghent, Hamburg and Bologna from 2004 onwards).

It is hoped that all future conferences can be organised through a single Professional Conference Organiser that can arrange conferences throughout Europe. SRF have identified Procon Conferences Limited (based in Harrogate) as such a company with an impressive track record of experience and all of the requisite facilities.

A number of additional improvements (*e.g.* introduction of poster prizes, exchange lectures with SSR, arrangements for on-line abstract submission/acknowledgement/processing) have also been agreed, and we are optimistic that these will synergise to make for attractive conferences in the years ahead. We recognise that these changes may not prove popular with all members of SRF, but are convinced that, based on trends over the past 5 years or so, such bold steps are not only justified but necessary. We hope that these changes to the format of future SRF conferences will be accepted by Society members as an evolutionary process, driven by changes to the funding and organisation of science in the 21st century. With patience and support, we hope that we will be able to offer SRF members a single, high profile conference each year where top quality science is discussed among a critical mass of delegates either in the UK or (on alternate years) in continental Europe.

If you have attended recent SRF conferences, I hope that you will continue to support the conferences as these changes come into effect. Alternatively, if you have been unable to give your support to SRF conferences over the past few years, I hope that the

proposed changes will give you cause to reconsider and put those conferences in which SRF is a major partner back into your diary as a regular fixture. In either event, can I reiterate my invitation to contact me directly (t.michael@rhc.ucl.ac.uk) if you have any comments that you would like me to relay to the Meetings Committee and/or SRF Council.

Hope to see you in Aberdeen for Fertility 2003!

Tony Michael, SRF Programme Secretary

Members' News

SRF Council are pleased to announce that Professor Catherine Wilson has been awarded Honorary membership of the Society. Catherine has had a long association with SRF, and played a significant role in the merger of SSF and JRF, for which we are all grateful. She has recently retired from full time research and teaching at St. George's Hospital Medical School in London, and is looking forward to pursuing new interests and hobbies. We wish her all the best for the future, and hope she will continue her association with the Society for a long time to come.

Honorary membership may be awarded to scientists who have professionally retired, and have made a long-standing and substantial contribution to the SRF (formerly SSF or JRF). If you would like to nominate a colleague for Honorary membership, please write with supporting information to the General Secretary (see page 1 for address), who will forward the nomination to Council for consideration.

SRF Job Placement Scheme

The SRF Job Placement Scheme provides the opportunity for members to advertise positions vacant and for people looking for posts to let it be known that they are available and where their skills/interests lie. This service is offered free of charge through the website <http://www.srf-reproduction.org/society/vacancies/>, and by message board at the SRF conferences. This an ideal way for students coming to the end of their degree to let potential employers know that they will soon be available. For more information or to place an advert please visit the website, or contact: Ionnais Sfontouris, SRF Postgradoc Rep., School of Human Development, Division of Reproductive Medicine, D Floor, East Block, Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham, NG7 2UH

Email: Ioannis.Sfontouris@nottingham.ac.uk

Subscription Payment and SRF Membership

Have you paid your subscriptions yet? If not, this will be your last reminder. If your subscription is not received within 30 days, your membership will lapse so to make sure you are kept up to date and in touch with the Society's activities, please make every effort to make sure your payment is received by the membership office as soon as possible.

Do you have work colleagues who are not SRF members? Perhaps you should remind them of the benefits of membership and encourage them to join. Members are eligible to apply for travel grants and reduced subscriptions to our journal "Reproduction", and also get beneficial registration rates at SRF conferences. Further details are available from the Membership Office.

Future Society Meetings

2004: Change of venue and date

Following the success of the recent winter meeting in Tours we have decided to go back to Europe. **The SRF conference in 2004 will now be held in Ghent, Belgium**, and will be another joint European Fertility Societies meeting.

PLEASE NOTE the date of this meeting will change to April. Please make a note of this on your forward planner so that you remember to include this in your schedule. More details will be available shortly.

2005: Joint Meeting with BAS & BFS

More details will be available shortly.

Other Meetings etc.

Frontiers in Reproductive Endocrinology: A Comprehensive Review and Update, Savannah, Georgia USA, March 11-15, 2003. Contact: Joanne Rawson, Sero Symposia International, One Technology Place, Rockland, MA 02370 USA, Telephone: 800-283-8088, x2501 or 781-681-2501, FAX: 781-681-2915, Email: joanne.rawson@serono.com

22nd Joint Meeting of British Endocrine Societies, Glasgow, UK, 24-27 March 2003. Contact: British Endocrine Societies, 17/18 The Courtyard, Woodlands, Bradley Stoke, Bristol BS32 4NQ, UK (Tel: +44-(0)1454-619347; Fax: +44-(0)1454-616071; E-mail: info@endocrinology.org; Web: <http://www.endocrinology.org>).

6th European Congress of Endocrinology, Lyons, France, 26-30 April 2003. Contact: www.endocrinology2003.com.

19th Annual Meeting of the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology, Madrid, Spain, 29 June-2 July, 2003. Contact: ESHRE Central Office, Van Akenstraat 41, B-1850 Grimbergen, Belgium, Tel: +32-(0)2-269.09.69, Fax: +32-(0)2-269.56.00, <http://www.eshre.com>

Inhibins, activins and follistatins, Siena, Italy, 3-4 July, 2003. Contact: Department of Pediatrics, Obstetrics and Reproductive Medicine, University of Siena, Policlinico "Le Scotte", viale Bracci, 53100 Siena, Italy. Phone: (39) (0577) 586.649 fax: (39) (0577) 233.454 E-mail: obgyn@unisi.it.

European Academy of Andrology International Symposium, Genetics of Male Infertility: From Research to Clinic, University of Florence, Italy, 2-4 October 2003. Contact Dr. Czilla Krausz: Email: c.krausz@dfc.unifi.it; Web: <http://www.dfc.unifi.it/genetics-eaa/>

59th Annual Meeting of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, San Antonio, Texas, USA. 11-16 October 2003. Contact: American Society for Reproductive Medicine, 1209 Montgomery Highway, Birmingham, Alabama, USA 35216-2809, Phone (205) 978-5000, Fax (205) 978-5018, Email asrm@asrm.org, URL www.asrm.org

15th International Congress on Animal Reproduction, Salvador, Brazil, 8-12 August 2004. Contact: Brazilian College of Animal Reproduction, Alameda das Princesas, 1275 31275-180, Belo Horizonte-MG Brazil (Tel: +55 (31)491 7122; Fax: +55 (31) 491 7025; E-mail: cbra@cbra.org.br; Web: <http://www.cbra.org.br>).

The Society's Political Activities

Possibly, unknown to many of you, the SRF is actively involved in both lobbying and informing government and its agencies. Most of this activity is performed through our affiliations with bodies such as the UKLSC Animal Science Group and both the Biomedical Sciences and Agricultural Sciences Committees of the Institute of Biology (IoB). Two recent examples of our participation are:

1. Our involvement in responses made to the House of Lords Select Committee on Animals in Scientific Procedures both directly and indirectly (particularly through the UKLSC Animal Group which made a significant contribution to the debate). The Select Committee's report was published in July and on the whole their conclusions were welcomed.
2. Most recently the SRF submitted questions to the Chairman of the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, Dr Ian Gibson with respect to their enquiries into MRC funding. Some of our questions that we had suggested, were raised by the Committee when they interviewed Professor Sir George Radda,

Chief Executive Director of the MRC, on December 4th. Unfortunately the overall impression given by Sir George was that we should expect MRC response-mode funding to be as poor as it was this year in this coming funding year and that funding to MRC units may continue to be cut.

It is intended that within the next few months information of these and other similar SRF activities will be available at our website. Also, on the website, will be details of up-coming issues and requests for your input. In this way it is envisaged that the SRF's voice will be even more representative of our membership and therefore more powerful. More details will be provided with the next Newsletter. In the meantime, if you have a burning issue that you believe the SRF should take to government then please contact myself in the first instance and it will be considered by Council.

Joanne Murray (SRF's representative on the UKLSC ASG and the IoB's Biomedical Sciences and Agricultural Sciences Committees)

jmurray@sghms.ac.uk

Grants and Scholarships

Travel Grants

Grants for attending meetings

The Council of Management of SRF is prepared to make grants to non-statutory members of the Society, up to a maximum of £300 in any two year period for (a) travel or (b) cost of special publications, subject to the availability of funds. A Committee considers applications received during the previous three-month period, at the end of March, June, September and December. Only in exceptional circumstances will applications be dealt with more quickly. Applications must be submitted in advance of the event to which they relate. A short report is required on the usefulness of the meeting.

N.B. Applicants must ensure that they have paid their current SRF membership subscription before submitting their application.

Grants towards attendance at SRF Meetings

Applicants (UK and overseas) are asked to give full details of travel and maintenance expenses and applications from UK-based non-statutory members must be accompanied by a photocopy of the completed booking form. Postgraduate non-salaried registered research students may apply for *all* SRF meetings, but the grants awarded must not exceed a total of £400 in any two-year period.

Application forms are available from and should be returned to:
The Company Secretary, Society for Reproduction and Fertility,
22 Newmarket Road, Cambridge CB5 8DT, Tel: 01223 351809,
Fax: 01223 359754, E-mail: cosec@srfadmin.demon.co.uk

Trust for Research and Education in the Biology of Reproduction

The attention of SRF members is drawn to this Trust which was established in 1982, under the management of independent Trustees, to award travel and subsistence grants for scientists working in reproductive biology. Applications will be considered

from non-members of the Society for Reproduction and Fertility, and those members who are ineligible to apply for other funding, who wish to attend scientific meetings or visit research laboratories. Applications from visiting scholars from developing countries are particularly encouraged.

Applications *must* be sponsored by a member of the Society for Reproduction and Fertility. The maximum grant is £300.

Further information and application forms are available from:

The Secretary, TREBR, 22 Newmarket Road, Cambridge, CB5 8DT. Tel: 01223 351809, Fax: 01223 359754, E-mail: cosec@srfadmin.demon.co.uk

Vacation Scholarships

As part of its policy of furthering research and education in the biology of reproduction, the Society for Reproduction and Fertility invites applications from undergraduate students for a limited number of Vacation Scholarships. The objective of these scholarships is to enable particularly promising students to work during vacations in 2003 in university departments or research institutes in the UK or Irish Republic on research projects relating to reproduction and fertility in man and other animals.

Students should normally be in the middle years of their degree studies and may be considering research as a career. The scholarships are available for up to 8 weeks' work and funding is provided at a level to cover basic living expenses. Only one scholarship can be held in one department. Scholarships are not available for students to undertake projects which form part of their normal degree course.

Application forms can be obtained by writing to:

The Company Secretary, Society for Reproduction and Fertility,
22 Newmarket Road, Cambridge CB5 8DT. Tel: 01223 351809,
Fax: 01223 359754, E-mail: cosec@srfadmin.demon.co.uk

The closing date for receipt of applications is: **28 March 2003** for Summer vacation projects.