

Newsletter No: 191 July 2007



Society for Reproduction and Fertility

Newsletter compiled by John Parrington (SRF General Secretary).

Contact me with comments/queries via:

SRF Business Office, Procon Conferences Ltd., Tattersall House, East Parade, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG1 5LT, UK.

Tel: +44 (0)1423 564488 Fax: +44 (0)1423 701433

E-mail: SRFSecretariat@procon-conferences.co.uk

SRF Chairman's Thoughts

In the aftermath of our recent AGM and the success of the Joint Fertility Societies meeting in York it is now time to reflect on the progress that the Council of Management making with the many challenges that face societies such as SRF. Since the AGM in 2006 the efforts of Council have largely been focussed in three areas.

The Finance Committee, under the direction of Martin Luck, has continued to manage the income and expenditure of the SRF to provide the financial stability required to support the current and future academic and charitable activities of the Society. The new strategy implemented in 2006 to provide postgraduate and postdoctoral members with grant support to attend our annual conference and present their work has proved encouraging as a means to promote scholarship and encourage the membership of the next generation of reproductive scientists. After reviewing the uptake of these grants Council has agreed to continue to endorse this award scheme over the coming year. The policy and process for the award of travel grants, educational grants for vacation scholarships and also sponsorship for meetings have all been streamlined and funds for all of these activities are now available through defined annual budgets which will support all of these agendas. Ever mindful of our accountability to the Society members, recipients of sponsorship for meetings and symposia, individual members receiving travels and summer students are encouraged to provide high quality review articles for publication in *Reproduction*, articles for the

newsletter or posters for presentation at the annual conference, respectively. A dedicated fund has been set-up to help support SRF members who wish to attend the first World Congress in Reproductive Biology in 2008.

A significant challenge facing the Council of Management over the next 12 months is the need to rebuild the membership of the Society. Using the membership database, and the additional information provided on the membership renewal forms we are now better able to accurately record changes in the demographics of existing members by category as well as country and we can readily monitor the impact of membership recruitment drives. While our strategy to encourage postgraduate and postdoctoral fellows to join the SRF through the conference grant scheme proved encouraging in 2006, this initial success must be maintained over the coming years. There is also a clear need to retain senior and retired members of the Society and to re-engage their interests and encourage their contribution to continued scientific debate through attendance at the annual conferences. The activities of Council will focus on membership review in the coming months.

The utility of the SRF website is currently under review. Council is keen to encourage members to use the SRF website as a resource to provide access to the Journal, conference abstracts, past issues of the newsletters and to provide information on conferences, summer studentships and conference and travel grant schemes. We would

also like to encourage members to use the website as a free vehicle to advertise job vacancies and studentships and recruit scientists and students. Members wishing to use this facility should contact our secretariat at Procon with the details of their vacancies. In due course we anticipate that digitised past issues of JRF will be freely accessible to members via the Society website.

In recent years the numbers of members and non-members attending and presenting their work at SRF conferences have dwindled, creating concern about the sustainability of the SRF conference in the long-term and the format and frequency of hosting conferences in the short-term. The increasingly "commercial" prices charged by Universities to host conferences and provide accommodation for delegates together with the need for professional conference organisation have proved problematic to Societies. These issues have been debated at length by Council and by the Meetings Sub-Committee, chaired by Henry Jabbour. The feedback obtained from delegates attending the annual meeting in Leeds in 2006, together with that from the last joint fertility societies meeting in 2005 drove the development of an improved scientific programme for Fertility 2007 in York in April with the hope that this strategy would better address the needs and scientific interests of the membership of the three Societies involved. The increased number of delegates attending the 2007 conference relative to the previous joint meeting is very encouraging, and despite the power cuts, the feedback on the scientific content was good. However there can be no room for complacency if we are to continue to move forward. In the summer of 2008 we will host a two-day "back-to-basics" SRF conference in Edinburgh. The scientific programme of this meeting promises to be excellent and the cost of the meeting should make it highly accessible to members. Additionally, through ongoing discussion with colleagues from North America (SSR), Australia (ARB) and Japan, the SRF has contributed to the scientific programme of World Congress on Reproductive Biology, which will be held in Hawaii in May 2008. We hope that SRF members will be well represented at the Congress.

I hope this overview will provide some insight into the activities of Council and the progress that we are making on behalf of the members of the Society.

Helen Picton

Members of SRF Council

Chair:	Helen Picton
Treasurer and Company Secretary:	Martin Luck
General Secretary:	John Parrington
Programme Secretary:	Henry Jabbour
Editor in Chief:	John Carroll

Committee Chairs:

Finance:	Martin Luck
Meetings:	Henry Jabbour
Education & Development:	John Parrington

Ordinary members:	Paul Fowler Colin Duncan Franchesca Houghton Eduardo Roldan Rachel Webb
--------------------------	---

Post-grad/doc Rep:	Michelle Myers Andy Childs
---------------------------	-------------------------------

Travel Grants and Vacation Scholarships

All non-statutory members of the Society are eligible to apply for travel grants to attend conferences organised by the SRF or other bodies. For further information including an online application form, please visit the website (<http://srf-reproduction.org>) or contact the SRF Business Office.

Recently travel grants were awarded to B Aflatoonian, J Razavi, A Sirotkin, K Sales, T Lannagan, J James

The Society also sponsors Vacation Scholarships which help to fund promising undergraduate students who wish to carry out research projects in their Easter or summer holidays. If you have a project, or know of a suitable student, please visit the website for further information about how to apply. Please note that students at all stages of their undergraduate degree are now eligible.

For the summer vacation, scholarships were awarded to Katie Howe, Jamie Oughton, Diana Rubini-Costa, Ami Sawran, Samira Tritton.

All travel grant recipients are required to write a short report about the meeting they attended and to acknowledge SRF support on any poster or oral presentations. These reports should be sent to the SRF General Secretary via the Business Office and may be published in the SRF newsletter.

The SRF would like to encourage Vacation Scholarship award recipients (student or supervisor) to present their results as a poster presentation at the next SRF meeting. Registration will be waived for students presenting their scholarship data at the SRF conference. In the event that the student/supervisor is unable to attend the SRF conference a full report will be required detailing the findings of their investigation. This report may be published in the SRF newsletter.

From the Programme Secretary

Thanks to those Society members that supported the last SRF annual meeting held jointly with British Fertility Society (BFS) and the Association of Clinical Embryologists (ACE). The meeting was held in the historic city of York from April 15-18. We hope that those of you who attended the meeting enjoyed both the scientific content and the social programme.

The conference featured various symposia, award plenary lectures and newly introduced research update sessions. The SRF distinguished scientist lecture entitled: "Conceptus signals for establishing and maintaining pregnancy" was delivered by Professor Fuller Bazer from Texas A&M University. Dr Peter Sharp from Roslin Institute was the recipient of the 2007 Marshall Medal and this was awarded at our conference dinner hosted at The Galleria Restaurant at The University of York.

Dr Alex Reis from Newcastle University was the recipient of The SRF New Investigator Scientist Award for 2007. Alex delivered her award lecture entitled "Meiotic loss of *cdh1* induces chromosome non-disjunction". The SSR New Investigator Scientist, Dr Andrea Cupp from The University of Nebraska-Lincoln delivered a lecture entitled "Sex specific gonadal morphogenesis is dependent on VEGFA".

We have had a good submission rate of abstracts to this conference. Our student members made a strong presence in York. We had a high number of abstracts submitted for consideration for the SRF student prize. Six abstracts were short-listed for this prize and the students presented their work in a SRF student prize oral session. Congratulations to Gemma Evans and Gillian Cowen who were joint recipients of the SRF student prize for 2007.

For full details of the abstracts of our 2007 conference please go to our webpage: www.srf-reproduction.org/meetings/fertility07.htm

The organisation of our SRF 2008 conference is underway. It will be held in Edinburgh from June 29th to July 1st at Pollock Halls. The scientific programme will contain three symposia entitled: Signalling in reproduction (Symposium 1), Evolution of reproduction (Symposium 2) and gametogenesis and differentiation (Symposium 3). The Distinguished Scientist Lecture will be delivered by Professor Anne Grete Byskov from University of Copenhagen and Professor Alan McNeilly will receive the Marshall Medal at our traditional conference dinner.

The deadline for abstract submission for SRF 2008 will be February 28, 2008.

SRF is also taking part in organising the inaugural meeting of the World Congress on Reproductive Biology (WCRB) to be held May 24-26, 2008, on the Kona Coast of the Big Island of Hawaii. This

meeting will run just prior to the 41st Annual meeting of the Society for the Study of Reproduction (SSR), which will be held between May 26th-29th in the same venue. The WCRB will bring together leading investigators from Asia, Australia, Europe, and North America to present and discuss recent work on topics of common interest to reproductive biologists in different countries. The program for the WCRB will feature plenary presentations, concurrent sessions, and a single poster session. Further details regarding the WCRB meeting will be forthcoming in the coming months. Please keep checking our website for further details in due course.

Henry N Jabbour

From the Treasurer

Scientifically, *Fertility 2007* was great success and demonstrated the value of collaborating with our partners in ACE and BFS. It is pleasing to report that it was also a success financially: it generated a small surplus, which will be distributed between the three societies according to their membership numbers. When planning its conferences, the Society tries to strike a balance between affordable registration fees and financial probity. This policy sometimes results in a loss, sometimes in a surplus, depending on the number of delegates and the level of commercial sponsorship. Both variables were advantageous for *Fertility 2007*.

The Society's scheme to help younger members attend *Fertility 2007* was taken up by 28 individuals. Each award was worth £350. A significant number of non-statutory members also received travel grants of similar value. The Society was also pleased to assist the attendance of its Vacation Scholars; delegates who heard their conference presentations will have been impressed by the quality of the research which was reported. It is pleasing to announce that five Vacation Scholarship have been awarded in the current year, and also that the fund is to be increased to allow for six Scholarships in 2008.

The Society is associated with two conferences in 2008: the Word Congress of Reproductive Biology (Hawaii) and its own Annual Conference (Edinburgh). As a key member of the WCRB consortium, the Society will be setting up a fund to assist members and to ensure that it is well represented at the Congress. Details of the grants available will be announced in due course, once the registration and accommodation costs of the Congress are known. Support for attendance at the Edinburgh meeting will also be available. We hope that research groups will find these support schemes helpful in a potentially expensive year.

The Society has recently agreed a new contract with Bioscientifica, publishers of *Reproduction*. This will ensure the continued success and stability of the Journal over the next few years. Journal prices have had to be increased for the coming year but the Society continues heavily to subsidise individual and member subscriptions. There has been a small increase in the number of published pages in the Journal and its impact factor remains competitive. It thus continues to represent outstanding value for money. The Society is working closely with Bioscientifica to ensure that the Journal responds adroitly to developments in the scientific journal market. This includes the demand by some public research funding bodies that papers by their sponsored researchers are made electronically available immediately upon publication.

Finally, Richard Anderson has now stepped down from the Society's Finance Committee, following the completion of his term of office on Council. On behalf of the Committee, I should like to thank Richard for his valuable contribution and in particular for his involvement in the investment review carried out in 2005.

Martin Luck

Marshall Medal / SRF Distinguished Scientist Award

Council is always happy to receive nominations for future Marshall Medallists and for the SRF Distinguished Scientist Award. Each should take the form of a letter of commendation accompanied by an abridged CV for the candidate detailing:

- The area of expertise of the nominee
- Major contributions of the nominee to the field of reproductive biology
- Details of any professional honours already bestowed on the nominee
- An outline of the publication record of the nominee (total number of publications, indicating year of first publication)

Although nominations can be made by any individual member of the Society (irrespective of non-statutory or statutory status), the letter of commendation should list other members of the Society prepared to formally endorse the nomination.

New Investigator Awards

Recipients of the SRF New Investigator Award are selected from a short-list of eligible candidates on the basis of their abstract submission to the Annual Conference, their curriculum vitae and letters of

support from senior colleagues. Eligible candidates will have completed ten years (or less) of post-doctoral research. We are currently interested in nominations for 2008

Best Post-Doc Presentation and Best Poster Prize

We are introducing two new awards for our members and delegates attending the SRF 2008 meeting. "Postdoctoral scientist prize" is aimed for postdoctoral members of the Society who are within four years of having obtained their PhD. Three candidates will be shortlisted for this prize, following peer review of their abstracts, and will deliver their presentations in a designated session. The other award is a "Poster Prize" which is open to all poster presentations at the conference. This may be awarded to members or non-members and will be judged on the basis of the poster, not the abstract. The recipients of these two prizes along with our more established PhD student prize will be announced at our annual dinner.

In the first instance, nominations for the above awards should be submitted to the SRF programme Secretary via the Business Office. Please send any nominations you may have for our 2008 conference by March 1, 2007.

Postgraduate / Postdoc Corner

With the York meeting over, it is now time to think about getting your kilts ready for the 2008 SRF annual meeting which will be held in the beautiful city of Edinburgh. York however was a great meeting for the postgrads beginning with the 'intimate' trivia quiz night that kicked off the conference festivities on the Sunday. We were educated by many interesting and extremely useful (or maybe useless?!) facts over the course of the night. For example, we are now all aware that Barbie received a belly button in the year 2000 (although many other suggestions were made...), the thinnest skin on the body is the eyelid and although all topics were guessed correctly, most of us should keep our day jobs and not become professional cartoonists (the pictorial round)! Congratulations should also be given to the winners – Own Goal, who sadly knew an answer involving the street location of the Vic pub in the soap Eastenders.

As always, the SRF student prize session was of extremely high standard and out of 30+ abstracts, six finalists were selected to present their work in the prize session at the meeting. Congratulations to all our finalists that presented in the session: Sarah Cassie, Gillian Cowen, Jemma Evans, Deborah

Fischer, Abasali Kokab and Catriona Paul. It was stiff competition with Gillian and Jemma taking home prizes for the competition, so well done girls!!

Lastly, we would like to say a big thank you to Bob Robinson, who steps down from his role as the Senior Postgrad doc rep for the society. Bob has been an integral part of the SRF over the past few years contributing to the Meetings, Education and Council committees. Coinciding with Bob's departure is the arrival of newly elected Postgrad doc rep Andy Childs. Andy has recently started a Career Development Fellowship in the Human Reproductive Sciences Unit at the MRC in Edinburgh. So congratulations to Andy and welcome aboard! Any postgrad doc members that would like to voice their opinions or ask questions about the society are encouraged to contact either Michelle Myers (m.myers@sms.ed.ac.uk) or Andy Childs (a.childs@hrsu.mrc.ac.uk) who are here to look out for the junior members of the SRF.

Until next time,

Michelle, Bob and Andy

Publications

Dear SRF Members,

It is that time of year again when Editors are musing over the latest release of Impact Factors. Over the last 3 years Reproduction has moved from 2.447 to 3.136 to 2.958. I must confess to being a little disappointed that the upward trend has not continued but at least it is holding steady within the noise of the system.

I am continuously impressed by the community of referees and the Editorial Board in their ability respond to the increasing numbers of papers we are handling. As the numbers of papers submitted to the Journal continues to climb everyone begins to feel the pressure. Editors and authors are those feeling it greatest. Editors because they have to make difficult decisions based on referees reports and on a view as to whether the paper fits the scope of the Journal. Authors are feeling it because we are now accepting just over 30% of papers that are submitted to the Journal. Inevitably this leads to some heated debate as to the quality of the reports and the final decisions. I must say that I am reassured that, after careful re-reading of all the evidence, I rarely find the need to revise the decision. This is not to say we always get it right; at the strange hours of the evening that we scientists work, errors of judgement are always possible.

We are introducing some new formats and paper layouts over the next few months. The first will be a 'Reproduction Report' which is designed to be a

short paper of no more than 4 Figures. It is not meant to be a vehicle for publishing preliminary data, rather for the rapid publication of novel interesting data. The main format will continue to be the 'Reproduction Article' but this will look a little different. In order to save space and ultimately publish more papers we will be moving the Methods section to the back of the Article and reducing the font size of the Methods and References. This is now a commonly used format so I hope it will not be overly controversial.

Open access continues to exercise our minds. We are all committed to wide distribution of scientific literature but this noble aim needs to be offset against a business model that pays for the cost of the publication. I am glad to say that after many hours of energetic exchange we have come to the decision to move down a mixed funding model. We will continue to operate a subscription based system where libraries or individuals pay for the Journal but we are considering introducing an option for individuals to pay up front for their manuscript to be available immediately on publication. For most of us the £2000 open access publication fee will not be overly enticing. For those whose work is funded by the Wellcome Trust (one of the major funding bodies in the UK) there is a commitment to publish using this open access route. Fortunately, the Wellcome Trust has put their money behind the noble ambition of free access to all and you will be able to have this paid by your Institution. If you are in the dark as to where this money is, be sure to contact your HoD or Dean to find out how to have these fees paid. Most importantly, don't let it put you off publishing in Reproduction.

John Carroll

Education and Development

A key function of the Education and Development committee of the SRF is helping to develop the scientific careers of young and not so young reproductive biologists through awarding Travel Grants and Vacation Scholarships.

In May 2007 at a meeting of the Education and Development committee a decision was made to help facilitate the procedures whereby applications for these two types of awards are assessed. We decided upon the following:

Vacation Scholarships

Students should normally be in the middle years of their degree studies and may be considering research as a career. Projects can be a maximum of 8 weeks and will be funded at the same rate as the Wellcome Trust summer studentships. Scholarships

are not available for students to undertake projects which form part of their normal degree course. Novel, stand alone projects are encouraged and the SRF would strongly encourage award recipients (student or supervisor) to present their results at the annual SRF meeting if possible. Registration and reasonable expenses will be covered for any student presenting their scholarship data at this conference. In the event that the student/supervisor is unable to attend the SRF conference a full report will be required detailing the findings of their investigation. This report may be published in the SRF newsletter.

Only one scholarship will be awarded per student over the course of their undergraduate study and normally only one per department in any one year. Preference will be given to projects supervised by SRF members

The Deadline for applications will be the 31st of March, and applicants will be informed of the decision mid May

For Further details and application forms visit the SRF Web site

Travel Grants

Applicants can receive a maximum of £350 in any 2 year period. Applications must be submitted in advance of the event to which they relate, and grants will normally be made in advance. All grants will be paid in £'s sterling. A short report is required on the usefulness of the meeting. Applicants are required to have paid their current Society membership subscription.

Travel grants applications will be considered for the according to the deadlines below

15th January

15th April

15th September

Applicants will be normally be informed within month of the application deadline

For Further details and application forms visit the SRF Web site

Sponsorship for junior and retired members.

Also we want to remind junior members about sponsorship to the annual SRF meeting. This is a separate fund which is accessible to post-grad and junior post-doc members (within 6 yrs of attaining a

PhD). For eligibility and application form, go to the SRF Web site.

Retired members can also apply for funds to attend the annual SRF meeting.

Finally, a special mention needs to go to Norah Spears and Neil Evans who stood down from their positions on the Education and Development committee at the May meeting. Both Norah and Neil have played outstanding roles in ensuring that assessment of grants and scholarships runs smoothly and we would like to thank them both for their hard efforts over the years.

John Parrington and Rachel Webb

Honorary Members

Would you like to nominate a colleague for the distinction of becoming an Honorary Member of the Society for Reproduction and Fertility? If you consider someone to be worthy of this tribute, please pass their details forward to the General Secretary, giving justification for your nomination and the name of a second, supporting member of the Society. Proposals for Honorary Membership may be put forward by both Statutory and Non-Statutory members of the Society.
