

## Newsletter No: 192 / December 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](mailto:SRFSecretariat@procon-conferences.co.uk)**

---

#### **SRF Conference 2008**

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> June – Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> July

University of Edinburgh

PhD student and post-doc SRF members presenting work eligible for £350 support

29<sup>th</sup> February Deadline for abstract submission

20<sup>th</sup> May Deadline for Early Bird Registration

Further details on <http://www.srf-reproduction.org/>

---

#### **SRF Chairman's Thoughts**

As the old year wanes and the New Year approaches it is time to review the activities of the Society. A priority of the Council of Management in 2007, as in recent years, has been the need to increase membership numbers whilst at the same time enhancing the value of membership. Significant progress is being made towards both of these goals. The statistics prepared by Eduardo Roldan for inclusion in this newsletter clearly indicate that membership numbers are showing steady growth year on year through the recruitment of new UK, European, and international members. Council is also encouraged that the numbers of members attending and presenting their research at the annual conference is increasing. While these statistics are encouraging there is no room for complacency. The trend for increased membership and conference attendance needs to continue in 2008 if the SRF conferences are to be successful. We hope that the excellent programme collated by Henry Jabbour and the Programme Committee, as well as the new prizes endorsed by Council will encourage members to contribute to the scientific and social events of the Edinburgh conference in June 2008.

Different challenges face the next joint UK Fertility Societies conference – Fertility 2009. The feedback from SRF members attending Fertility 2007 in York suggested that the high costs of the joint conference format compromise attendance. While SRF has supported its members by underwriting the registration costs through provision of increased conference attendance grants, this solution is not sustainable in the long term and a different strategy is required. An imaginative approach is required to reduce the venue and accommodation costs, to increase the level of commercial sponsorship and to increase delegate numbers whilst at the same time maintaining the calibre of the science. University venues are no longer a cheap option and sponsors are tending to favour international meetings such as the summer ESHRE conference. Taking all of these issues into consideration the Joint Executive Committee of Fertility 2009 has taken the bold decision to establish a new tradition to hold the joint meetings in the winter. This decision has been endorsed by the different member Societies and by the SRF Council of Management. Council will continue to support SRF members to attend Fertility 2009, which will take place on 7-9<sup>th</sup> January .

The changing nature of publishing has provided SRF with challenges in 2007. Under the guidance of John Carroll and with the help of our publishers at BioScientifica, we have revised and improved our policy on open access publishing of journal articles. We hope that the revisions we have implemented will better support the needs of submitting authors as well as the requirements of the different funding bodies including the Wellcome Trust, MRC and BBSRC. Further details on this policy are included in the author instructions on the Journal website. Council has implemented the retro digitisation of all of the back issues the *Journal of Reproduction and Fertility*. We hope to launch this full electronic archive in 2008. The archive, which will be in a searchable format, will be freely available to all.

Finally, it remains for me to thank John Carroll for his hard work as the Editor-in-Chief of *Reproduction* over the last four years as he steps down from his role at the end of December.

**Helen Picton**

---

## Members of SRF Council

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

### Committee Chairs:

<b>Finance:</b>	Martin Luck
<b>Meetings:</b>	Henry Jabbour
<b>Education &amp; Development:</b>	John Parrington

<b>Ordinary members:</b>	Richard Anderson Paul Fowler Colin Duncan Franchesca Houghton Eduardo Roldan
--------------------------	--

<b>Post-grad/doc Reps:</b>	Michelle Myers Andrew 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 Jemma Evans, Alison Forhead, Lynn Fraser, Rhiannon LLOYD, Waleed Marei, Adel Moawad, Georgia Papacleovoulou, Ramy Udayashankar

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.

Over the summer vacation scholarships were taken up by Katie Howe, Jamie Oughton, Diana Rubina Costa, Ami Sawran and 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

The organisation of our SRF 2008 conference is underway and 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). Full details of the speakers in each of these symposia can be viewed on our website:

<http://www.srf-reproduction.org/meetings/conf2008/default.htm>

The deadline for abstract submission for SRF 2008 will be February 29, 2008.

We have introduced two new awards for our members at the SRF 2008 meeting. "Postdoctoral scientist prize" is aimed for postdoctoral scientists 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. Postdoctoral scientists who qualify for this

award should tick the relevant box when submitting their abstract online.

The other award is a "Poster Prize" and is open to all poster presentations. The recipients of these two prizes along with our more established PhD student prize will be announced at our annual dinner.

SRF had also been involved in organising the inaugural meeting of the World Congress on Reproductive Biology (WCRB) to be held in May 23-25, 2008, on the Kona Coast of the Big Island of Hawaii. This meeting will run just prior to the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual meeting of the Society for the Study of Reproduction (SSR), which will be held between May 27-30 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 are available online:

<http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu/wcrb>

*Fertility 2007*, the 5<sup>th</sup> joint meeting of UK Fertility Societies held in York was an outstanding success both scientifically and financially. Based on the success of these joint ventures, planning for the 6<sup>th</sup> Joint meeting, *Fertility 2009* has commenced in earnest and will feature SRF, the British Fertility Society (BFS) and the Association of Clinical Embryologists (ACE). On behalf of the society and the Programme Committee, Robert Abayasekara, Helen Picton and Martin Luck have been involved in organising our joint Fertility meeting to be held in 2009.

In planning *Fertility 2009*, the committee has been mindful of the feedback provided by SRF members who in general have applauded the scientific content but complained about the ever increasing costs associated with these meetings. To keep costs within reach of SRF members, many options including the type of venue and the timing of the meeting have been considered. During these deliberations, it became apparent that scheduling the meeting during a non-traditional time of year would yield much dividend regarding costs. Therefore, following much debate and soul-searching, the organising committee from the three societies settled on **7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> January 2009** as the dates for *Fertility 2009*.

These dates have allowed us to budget for a figure of **~£400 for registration and accommodation** which is considerably less than the £650 paid by members for *Fertility 2007* in York. In planning for these dates it will be clear to one and all that we are heading into uncharted waters! Whilst acknowledging that these changes may not meet with universal approval, the committee hopes that the reduced costs associated with a stimulating scientific and social programme will prove to be an unbeatable proposition for the vast majority of our

members. Further details regarding *Fertility 2009* will be posted on the SRF website in January 2008.

Finally, I will be stepping down as Programme Secretary of the Society after the SRF meeting in Edinburgh. Dr Robert Abayasekara will be taking this task over from me. I will remain on Council for the final year of my tenure (which ends in 2009) and will retain a presence on the programme committee to help in the smooth transition of activities to Robert.

I hope to welcome you in Edinburgh at our next SRF meeting.

**Henry N Jabbour**

---

## **From the Treasurer and Company Secretary**

### **Elections to Council**

There are currently two unfilled places on the SRF Council. Members of the Society are cordially invited to stand, with a view to being elected at the AGM on 30 June 2008. The Society would be pleased to receive nominations from overseas members, as well as those based in the UK.

Any statutory or non-statutory member may stand for election. Members of Council become directors and trustees of the Society, take part in Council and committee meetings, assist in abstract selection for conferences and have a key role in running and leading the Society. Council members automatically assume statutory membership for their four year period of office, which essentially means that they may not be beneficiaries of Society (they are ineligible for grants and travel support, for example). They may revert to non-statutory membership thereafter.

Nomination papers will be sent out to all members early in 2008. If there are more than two candidates, a list of those standing and a voting paper will be sent to statutory members up to three weeks before the AGM. Votes will be cast prior to the start of the AGM and the result announced as part of AGM business.

Please note that under the Society's rules any statutory or non-statutory member may stand for election or make a nomination, but only statutory members may vote. If you are unsure of your membership status, please contact the SRF Office. Ordinary members of the Society are non-statutory by default.

### **Appointment of Officers**

In addition to appointing new Council members, the Society needs to replace its main Officers. Helen Picton (Chair) and I (Treasurer and Company Secretary) come to the end of our periods of office in

2009. The usual practice is to allow shadow appointments for a year, so that the new incumbents may find their feet and understand their roles. We therefore plan to have shadow officers in place from the 2008 AGM.

Appointments will be made from amongst the members of Council and all Officers are required to stand for re-election on an annual basis. Appointment is for a maximum consecutive period of four years but existing Council members may take a full period of office in addition to their current period of service on Council.

Council therefore welcomes members' suggestions or nominations for these positions. The Society would also be pleased if members would consider standing for Council with a view to taking on an Officer role.

Please contact me ([martin.luck@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:martin.luck@nottingham.ac.uk)) if you would like any further information about Council membership or the roles of Officers.

#### **Conference travel support**

The Society is very pleased to confirm the continuation of its generous programme of support for members to attend conferences.

For the World Congress of Reproductive Biology in Hawaii, May 2008, the Society has put in place a **Special WCRB Subsidy of £500** for any non-statutory member who wishes to attend. This provision reflects the key role that SRF is playing in the organisation and running of the WCRB and the wish that as many members as possible will be able to take part. The Subsidy will be paid on confirmation of WCRB attendance together with travel and/or accommodation receipts. Because of the unique nature of the Congress, Council has agreed that members may apply for the Subsidy without reference to previous Travel Grants they may have received and without affecting future applications (although they cannot apply for a Travel Grant as well). However, applicants must have been fully paid up members of the Society for at least the current (2007) calendar year. Members may wish to note that the WCRB is followed immediately by SSR and preceded by a conference on Relaxin. A trip to Hawaii could therefore prove to be especially intellectually stimulating as well as pleasurable.

For the Annual Conference in Edinburgh, June 2008, younger members may apply for up to **£350** under the **Support for Conference Attendance** scheme. On this occasion, we will be asking that those seeking support provide receipts or invoices to confirm their expenses, in addition to normal evidence of attendance, paper or poster presentation and membership (or membership application). Other members may apply for **Travel Grant** support in the normal way.

Regarding Edinburgh 2008, there will be no separate registration rates for members and non-members. This is because the Society already expects to be providing a significant level of financial support for this meeting.

**Martin Luck**

---

## **Membership Renewal**

The Society's membership year runs from the 1<sup>st</sup> December until 30th November. Unfortunately, members who join the Society part way through a year will be served with a renewal notice before they have received 12 months member's benefits. However, in the interests of keeping administration costs to a minimum it is not possible to allow members to renew on the anniversary of their application being approved.

In order to allow members the opportunity to renew, the Members Only area of the website will remain accessible using your existing password until the end of February 2008, when new passwords will be issued to those who have returned their renewal forms. If you have any difficulty in renewing your membership, or would like new copies of the renewal form to be issued, please contact the Business Office.

---

## **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.

In 2008, the Marshall Medal will be awarded to Professor Alan McNeilly at the SRF Conference Dinner and the SRF Distinguished Scientist Lecture will be delivered at the Conference by Professor

Anne Grete Byskov from The University of Copenhagen.

## 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 2009.

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 2009 conference by March 1, 2008.

---

## Postgraduate / Postdoc Corner

With Christmas and all the associated distractions almost upon us, thoughts of next summer and writing abstracts are probably far from most people's minds. However, fast approaching too is the abstract deadline for next year's SRF meeting in the historic and lively city of Edinburgh. Following on from the success of the SRF Student prize session at the Fertility 2007 meeting in York, we'd like to encourage all students to submit their abstracts to the SRF Student prize. The best will be selected to be presented as short talks at the meeting. Closing date for abstracts is February 29<sup>th</sup>. Remember all SRF student members and postdoctoral members who are presenting abstracts are entitled to apply for a bursary of up to £350 to cover the cost of attending the Edinburgh meeting.

In addition to a fantastic and diverse programme of top speakers, the post-grad/doc reps will again be running the SRF quiz on the first night of the Edinburgh meeting. The 2008 quiz will be open to everyone attending the conference, providing a great opportunity to mix with other post-grad/doc members, scientists from all stages of their careers and hopefully some of the invited speakers in an informal social setting. Judging from the success of the 2007 quiz in York, it promises to be an entertaining (and highly competitive!) evening.

Finally, having successfully completed her PhD, post-grad/doc representative Dr Michelle Myers will be heading to new and warmer pastures to take up a postdoctoral fellowship at Baylor College of Medicine, Houston. Michelle has been a committed and highly effective post-grad/doc rep over the past couple of years, and not to mention a highly accomplished SRF quiz master. We wish Michelle the best of luck for the future and thank her for all

her efforts over the last couple of years as post-grad/doc rep. Michelle's departure means that there will be a vacancy for a new SRF post-grad/doc representative, so if you think you'd like to play a part in the organisation and running of the society, and representing the interests of SRF members at the early stages of their careers please consider standing. We'll be holding the election for the new rep immediately after the SRF Student Prize session at the Edinburgh conference. If you'd like some more information about what the role entails, feel free to email either Michelle ([m.myers@sms.ed.ac.uk](mailto:m.myers@sms.ed.ac.uk)) or Andy Childs ([a.childs@hrcsu.mrc.ac.uk](mailto:a.childs@hrcsu.mrc.ac.uk)).

It just leaves us to wish you all the best for Christmas and the New Year, and we look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in Edinburgh next summer.

**Andy and Michelle.**

---

## Publications

As well as thanking Professor John Carroll, Editor-in-Chief of *Reproduction*, who will be retiring from his post at the end of December, for all his hard work over the last four years, Council would like to welcome the next Editor-in-Chief, Professor Tom Fleming.

Tom graduated in Zoology from University of Wales (Swansea) in 1972 and completed his PhD in reproductive cell biology at University of London in 1979. He has since held research posts at University of Keele and Cambridge University prior to moving to University of Southampton in 1989. He is currently Professor of Developmental Biology and Head of the Developmental and Cell Biology Group in the School of Biological Sciences at Southampton. He first became active as a researcher into mechanisms of mammalian early development working with Professor Martin Johnson and colleagues at Cambridge during the 80s. His direct interests include the formation and morphogenesis of the blastocyst, in particular mechanisms of pre-implantation cell lineage specification and the origin and differentiation of the trophoblast epithelium using mainly mouse but also human and other animal models. These studies have been important in defining the role of cell contact signalling in both time and space on the cell biology of differentiation and morphogenesis.

In addition, Tom is interested in how environmental factors may affect embryo developmental potential in rodents. Here, his work has centred on the effects of maternal diet during early development on fetal and postnatal health and disease susceptibility. An alternate model is the effect of embryo culture conditions as used in assisted conception

technologies on later health outcomes. These models indicate embryo environment is critical in setting the subsequent developmental programme and several aspects of adult phenotype, including cardiovascular and metabolic physiology and behaviour. His research is funded mainly by the MRC, BBSRC, Wellcome Trust and National Institutes of Health, USA. Having already served as a member of the Editorial Board of Reproduction for some years, Tom has lots of experience of working for the Journal.

## 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. Details of these awards and the people who have received them recently are described elsewhere in the newsletter. The committee is also now centrally involved in monitoring and improving the SRF website with Professor Eduardo Roldan. In a recent meeting of the Education and Development committee at which Professor Roldan was also present, it was decided that the website could benefit from a major re-organisation, both in terms of its overall look and its ease of navigation. It was decided to seek competitive quotes from three website design companies and choose one of these to re-design the website. We are aiming to have a re-designed website proposal ready for scrutiny by Council in May. We would welcome suggestions from members for ways in which we can improve the website and make it more interactive. These should be sent to the Education and Development Committee via the Business Office.

Another initiative we are planning is the launch of an annual essay competition for undergraduates. The essay must be about an aspect of reproductive biology and will be assessed on scientific content, style and topicality. The maximum word length will be 2000 words and the deadline for submissions for 2008 will be 1<sup>st</sup> March. The winner of the competition will get £500 and be invited to attend the SRF annual meeting, with registration, accommodation and travel covered. The second prize will be £250 and the third prize £100. All three winning entries will be published on the SRF website. Further details are available on the website

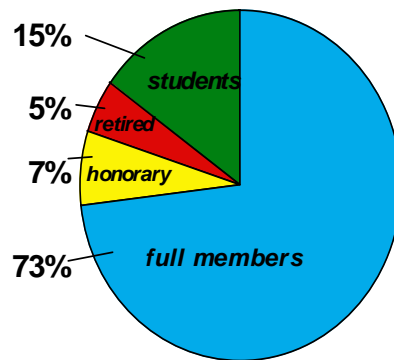
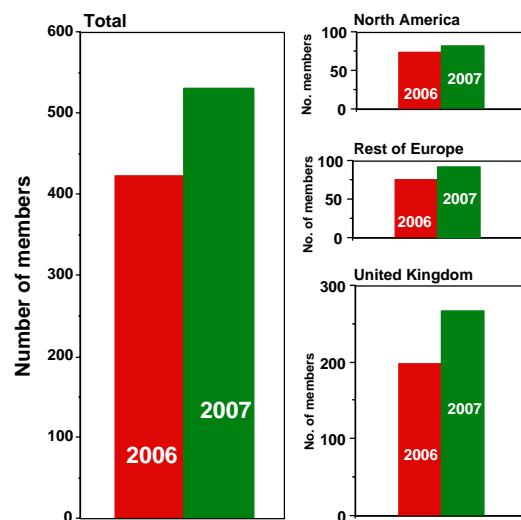
**John Parrington**

## 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.

## Membership changes in SRF in 2006 and 2007



## Members 2007

The main changes for 2007 are a considerable increase in the number of members from the UK (from 198 to 267), along with important increases in the number of members from Australia, Spain, Ireland and the USA.

**Eduardo Roldan**