

The XII International Symposium on Cholinergic Mechanisms

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Beginning with the very first International Symposium on Cholinergic Mechanisms (ISCM) held in 1970 in Skokloster (Stockholm), Sweden, as an initiative headed by the late Edith Heilbronn, the ISCMs became a semi-official gathering of investigators of the cholinergic system from all over the world. Having a scientific meeting fully dedicated to the many facets of the cholinergic system seems a sensible idea and indeed, many of those who joined the first ISCM 36 years ago have kept themselves involved in organizing and providing leadership in subsequent editions, as they still do today, mostly as members of the International Advisory Boards.

Following the Swedish initiative, ISCMs have been held every three years in countries including Switzerland, the United States, Italy, Great Britain, Canada, Germany, and France. The decision of hosting the XII ISCM in Alicante, Spain was taken at the XI ISCM by the International Advisory Board after considering the proposal presented by José M. González-Ros, who planned to implicate in the meeting's program most of the Spanish scientists working in cholinergic areas. As a result, an Organizing Committee was formed which included González-Ros as the Chairman plus A. Ferrer-Montiel, G. Fernández-Ballester, J. A. Encinar and M. Criado (all from the Universidad Miguel Hernández), A. Morales (Universidad de Alicante), C. Vidal (Universidad de Murcia), and C. Solsona (Universidad de Barcelona). The Organizing Committee was helped in many

different matters by an International Advisory Board chaired by A. Karczmar (United States) which included A. García (Spain), B. P. Doctor (United States), E. Giacobini (Switzerland), E. X. Albuquerque (United States), F. Clementi (Italy), G. Pepeu (Italy), H. Soreq (Israel), I. Silman (Israel), J. Massoulie (France), J. Klein (USA), S. Wonnacott (United Kingdom), S. Froehner (USA), V. Whittaker (UK), Y. Dunant (Switzerland), and N. J. Woolf (United States).

As in the case of previous ISCMs, the objective of the XII ISCM was to provide an environment for discussing the classical fields of cholinergic research as well as to present the latest advances in the understanding of cholinergic mechanisms and their implications for human pathologies. A central focus was the consideration of current therapies and the establishment of new opportunities for drug intervention for Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, dystonias, pain, and so on. As a novelty, the Symposium also aimed at presenting the role of the cholinergic mechanisms in cosmetic research. In pursuing such goals the meeting included three Plenary Lectures that were given by Stanley Froehner (Maintenance of molecular organization at the neuromuscular synapse; chaired by V. Whittaker); Darwin W. Berg (Nicotinic signal transduction machinery, chaired by S. Froehner), and Manuela García (Can cholinesterase inhibitors provide additional effects to cholinergic transmission enhancement?, chaired by Geoffrey C. Dunbar). Also, twelve different sessions or symposia

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were also included, dedicated to nicotinic acetylcholine receptors (chaired by M. Criado), muscarinic acetylcholine receptors (chaired by N. J. M. Birdsall and W. Buño), cholinergic drug discovery (chaired by H. Bushmann and A. Ferrer-Montiel), crosstalk between cholinergic and other neurotransmitter systems (chaired by M. T. Miras-Portugal and S. Wonnacott), cholinergic mechanisms in movement disorders and pain (chaired by M. Asín), cholinergic involvement in brain aging and neurodegenerative disorders (chaired by J. Klein), molecular diversity in acetylcholinesterases (chaired by I. Silman and C. Vidal), cholinergic transmission and toxicology (chaired by B.P. Doctor), noncanonical cholinesterases and their inhibitors (chaired by P.G. Layer and A. Morales), neuromuscular junction (chaired by C. Solsona), modulation of cholinergic transmission by nonconventional ligands (chaired by E. Albuquerque), and cholinergic correlates of behaviour and brain higher functions (chaired by A. Karczmar and J. M. Delgado). A large number of contributions in the form of poster panels were also presented.

This special issue of the *Journal of Molecular Neuroscience* contains a large selection from all the above communications, which represents a comprehensive

update on the very many different facets of the cholinergic field. Our hope as guest editors for this issue is to facilitate the exchange of reliable scientific information in this area and to contribute in keeping the cholinergic field as a stronghold of neuroscientific research.

Acknowledgments

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