

Message From The President, August 2014



Dear Colleagues,

As we are nearing the end of summer, activities and plans turn toward the coming academic year. This year marks the 22nd year since the PsychoNeuroImmunology Research Society (PNIRS) was incorporated. Our society and our field are maturing from the growing pains that are hallmark of adolescents into young adulthood, and our member organization has matured to the point where our research is clearly impactful.

The field of biomedical research, including neuroimmunology, is in a period of transition. The development of new molecular-genetic and pharmaco-genetic tools provides a means by which cell types in the brain may be manipulated with a specificity that could not be imagined only a few years ago. These new approaches not only allow determination of interactions between and among cells of the central nervous system, but allow investigators to more fully understand mechanisms by which the brain and peripheral immune system interact to modify behavior.

The outstanding research being done in our field was on display last May in Philadelphia, PA, at PNIRS 2014. One hundred eighty abstracts were accepted for presentation and the meeting, attended by more than 250 researchers, provided a wonderful venue for discussing science and potential research collaborations, socializing with 'old' friends and colleagues, and, of course, making new acquaintances. The high-quality scientific program was highlighted by four named lectures, a presidential symposium, two member-sponsored symposia, and an educational short course. Named lectures at PNIRS annual meetings recognize contributions to the field that are impactful and sustained. The 2014 named lectures illustrate the breadth of current PNI research. The [Norman Cousins Memorial Lecture](#) is presented by the Norman Cousins Awardee as a recipient of the highest honor bestowed by PNIRS. This lecture was presented by Dr. William A. Banks, University of Washington, and focused on the blood-brain barrier as a modulator of neuroimmune interactions. The [Robert Ader New Investigator Lecture](#) was given by Dr. Rohan Walker, University of Newcastle, Australia, on the topic of glial contributions to behavioral responses to stressors. New at PNIRS 2014 was the George Solomon Memorial Lecture. A generous pledge from the Society's Executive Director, Susan Solomon, will support this special lecture series for years to come. Dr. Richard Davidson, University of Wisconsin, gave the inaugural George Solomon Memorial Lecture on neural mechanisms affecting emotion and health. A keynote lecture in the newly titled Frontiers in PNI series was also included in the 2014 PNIRS scientific program. This lecture, given by outstanding non-PNIRS member scientists and supported by the PNIRS Excellence Fund, was given by Dr. Tracy Bale, University of Pennsylvania. Her presentation focused on the role of inflammation in prenatal stress and epigenetic programming. These outstanding invited lectures aim to further increase the visibility of our Society and to inspire the next generation of scientists exploring brain, behavior, and immunity.

Planning for PNIRS 2015 is well underway, with the goal of building on the success of the Philadelphia meeting. PNIRS 2015 will be held June 3 – 6 in Seattle, WA, USA. These dates were selected to immediately precede SLEEP 2015, which will also be held in Seattle. SLEEP, the annual meeting of the Sleep Research Society and the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, is attended by approximately 6,000 clinicians and investigators. Sleep – Immune interactions have long been recognized, and there are active research programs in many laboratories focused on the impact of immune challenge on sleep, and the role of insufficient sleep in the development or exacerbation of disease. The intent of organizing PNIRS 2015 to coincide with SLEEP 2015 is to

further cross-foster research in PNI and sleep. As such, several sessions at PNIRS 2015 will have sleep research components.

As current President of PNIRS, I welcome the opportunity to work with the Executive Committee of Annemieke Kavelaars (President-elect), Rod Johnson (Past-president), and Jan Moynihan (Secretary Treasurer), the Board of Directors, and all members of the PNIRS who provide service on committees as we continue our efforts to enrich an already vibrant research community.

Sincerely,

Mark R. Opp, PhD
PNIRS President