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PSSA News

Newsletter of the Physiology Society of Southern Africa (PSSA)

Highlights:

•**Top Achievers**

Top Achievers Awards at the Department of Physiology, University of Limpopo (Medunsa Campus)

On the 3rd March 2006 the department held its annual Top Achievers Award Ceremony during which their best students in the different courses were honored with merit certificates and prize money sponsored by Wyeth, Sanlam, PPS, ABSA, Minolta and Van Schaiks Book Stores. The ceremony was attended by the top students, dignitaries of the university, sponsors and staff members. In his speech Prof. Leon Hay (H.O.D.) praised the students for their hard work. Special reference was made to the remarkable achievements of Ms A Muissa, best student in Medical Physiology, whose final mark was 85%. As a French speaking student, coming from the Democratic Republic of Congo, she was able to overcome the language barrier and to equalize the best performance in the past 10 years! The event was organized by Prof. Linde Böhmer, who recently was promoted to the rank of associate professor (see page 2).

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Top students in the Department of Physiology, University of Limpopo (Medunsa Campus) in 2005

From left to right: Mr TJ Mathepa (Physiology II); Ms V Mashanda (Dental Physiology); Mr GV Mothibi (Physiology III); Ms MMA Muissa (Medical Physiology); Ms OO Longengo (Physiology for Allied Health Workers).

News from within our borders and beyond



Prof. Linde Böhmer from the Department of Physiology, University of Limpopo (Medunsa campus) – recently promoted to the rank of associate professor.

Her areas of research interest are:

1. Traditional medicines and their potential role in the treatment of cardiovascular diseases
2. Factors affecting the quality of objective assessment

University of Zimbabwe College of Health Sciences Physiology Department

Due to staffing constraints, the Department of Physiology at the University of Zimbabwe, College of Health Sciences is currently unable to offer a taught Masters Degree in Human Physiology. We however have a number of students we would like to send into the region to do this programme. If your department offers such a course please contact; The Chairperson Jeph Chifamba on email: physiology@medic.uz.ac.zw

University of the Witwatersrand, School of Physiology *New Appointments*

Prof Helen Laburn: Head of School of Physiology, from 2000 to 2006, has been appointed as Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences. She takes up the position on the 17th of July and we wish her well. See the next issue of PSSA News for an interview with Helen.

Mr Kwandakwethu Ndaba: Joined the School of Physiology as a technician mainly affiliated to the Brain Function Research Unit. He was previously employed at the School of Animal, Plant and Environmental Sciences (APE&S) as a Research and Development Officer.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF INVITED SPEAKERS

For Physiology Society of Southern Africa
34th Meeting
26-29 SEPTEMBER 2006

pssa2006@ukzn.ac.za

www.interaction.ukzn.ac.za/pssa2006

Ion channels and ion homeostasis in cardiovascular diseases: Recent advances. **Professor K Mubagwa.**
Leuven University, Belgium

Non-genomic expression of mineralocorticoid hormones
Dr N Ashton. United of Manchester, United Kingdom

Cutting Edge Technology: Immunological challenges in developing HIV vaccines
Prof Salim S.A. Karim, MBChB, PhD. Director: CAPRISA, Centre of AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa, University of KwaZulu-Natal,

Cutting Edge Technology: Confocal imaging of proteases in cancer
Ass Prof Edith Elliott. School of Biochemistry, Genetics, Microbiology and Plant Pathology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus

Cutting Edge Technology: Time lapsed wide-field microscopy in live cells
Dr Rob Smith. Dept Physiological Sciences, Stellenbosch University Main Campus

Cutting Edge Technology: Innovative uses of flow cytometry
Dr Hans Strijdom. Dept Medical Physiology, Stellenbosch University Medical School, Tygerberg Campus

Cutting Edge Technology: Elucidate physiological mechanisms using ChiP-on-ChiP. **Dr Edward Ojuka.** MRC/UCT Research Unit for Exercise Science and Sports Medicine, University of Cape Town

Circadian and homeostatic regulation of sleep and body temperature: lessons learnt from rats with suprachiasmatic lesions.

Dr Fiona Baker. Stanford Research Institute, San Francisco, USA

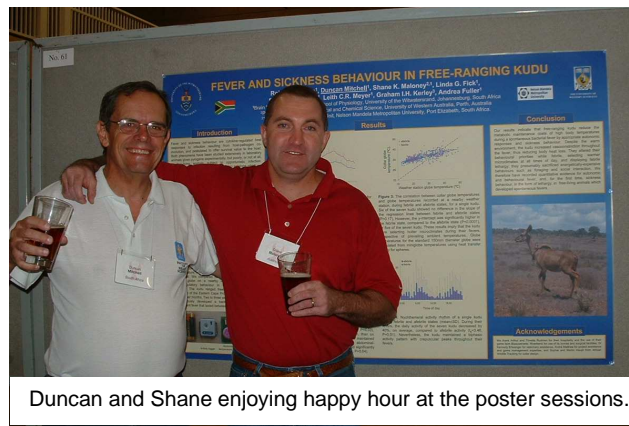
Feedback from the Second International Meeting on Physiology and Pharmacology of Temperature Regulation



(from left) Ms Lois Harden, Prof Helen Laburn, Dr Andrea Fuller, Dr Shane Maloney, Prof Duncan Mitchell, Ms Linda Fick

Earlier this year a group of Wits physiologists, Helen Laburn, Duncan Mitchell, Andrea Fuller, Lois Harden, Linda Fick, and Shane Maloney, a Wits Honorary Senior Research Fellow from the University of Western Australia, attended the second International Meeting on Physiology and Pharmacology of Temperature Regulation, previously a satellite symposium of the congress of the International Union of Physiological Sciences. The meeting was held in Arizona, USA, from 3-6 March 2006, at the idyllic Carefree Resort in the Sonoran desert, famous for its endemic saguaro cacti.

The meeting was very well-organized by Dr Andrej Romanovsky and his team, and consisted of three busy days of invited talks and evening poster sessions, although it's likely the free wine bar improved attendance at the late evening poster sessions! All of us that attended presented posters from our own research in the fields of fever or comparative physiology. Delegates were invited to submit their presented results for publication in a special issue of the *Journal of Thermal Biology* (volume 31, Jan/Feb 2006) and there was a special call for research papers in the field of fever from the *American Journal of Physiology* (Regulatory, Integrative and Comparative).



Duncan and Shane enjoying happy hour at the poster sessions.

With only 180 delegates (and only 7 from Africa!), there was opportunity to reminisce with old colleagues and establish new collaborative research. Some of the well-known speakers included Lars Nybo from the Institute of Exercise and Sports Science at the University of Copenhagen, who spoke on the influence of central fatigue during exercise in the heat, and Lisa Leon from the U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine, who gave a very interesting talk on the role of cytokines in heatstroke. Focus areas of the conference were thermometry, thermoregulation during exercise, and fever and inflammation. Some highlights of the conference included a diverse session devoted to the finalists of the young scientists competition and a session on the pharmacology of cyclooxygenases in tribute to Sir John Vane, who won the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1982 for his work on aspirin.

The Third International Meeting on Physiology and Pharmacology of Temperature Regulation will be held in Japan after the meeting of the IUPS in August 2009, and is sure to be worthwhile. If you are interested, look for updates on the IUPS website www.iups.org.

Linda Fick and Lois Harden

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medphys/pssa.htm](http://academic.sun.ac.za/medphys/pssa.htm)



Who said marking was not a joke?

Students can bring some humour into the mundane task of marking assignments, tests and exams, a couple of examples from exam scripts follow.

Q. How do you elicit the patellar reflex?

A1. Heat the patellar tendon.

A2. Stretch the muscle spindle with a rubber hammer.

A3. Hammer the patellar and kick the foot out.

A4. Stroke the bottom of the foot with a stroking instrument until the toe flexes dorsally.

Q. How do you elicit the pupillary light reflex?

A. Put a torch in the eye.

Q. Why does the patient's eye deviate laterally?

A1. The abducer cranial nerve is damaged.

A2. The oblique muscle of the eye is weaker than the rectum one.

Editors Words

All issues of the PSSA newsletter and correspondence sent out by the Society are available on the PSSA website.

Are you a PSSA member but do not receive the newsletter or any communication from the PSSA? Then you are not on our mailing list. Please send your email address to Kennedy Erlwanger so that you can be included on the PSSA mailing list.

See you in Durban!

PHYSIOLOGY SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA