

Message From The President July 2010

It is a great honor for me to accept the leadership the Psychoneuroimmunology Research Society (PNIRS), which has been my primary scientific home for almost two decades. Our society is very special, and I will make every effort to keep it this way. It is special because it was established by scientists who were not only intellectual pioneers, but were also courageous scientists, who risked their reputation by working within a new area that was on the fringe of several disciplines, and was considered quite unacceptable for a long time. Neither the discipline of Immunology, nor the disciplines of Neuroscience and Psychology, could accept many tenets and even facts proposed and documented by PNI researchers. It took a lot of courage and persistence to continue to push our field forward, and bring it to the high prestige that it now enjoys. This prestige is reflected by the interest of many top scientists in our annual meetings and by the phenomenal success of the Society's official journal – Brain, Behavior and Immunity, whose impact factor just rose to 5.06 (thanks to Keith Kelly and my fellow Associate Editors!). The current membership of PNIRS share this courage and persistence. The people who are involved in PNI research are not afraid to be a little different – not to function in the safe zone of the disciplinary consensus of Immunology, Neuroscience, or Psychology, but rather to ask global questions about the relationships between mind and body in health and disease, which scientists in the more established disciplines consider too complex to tackle. We strive to provide answers to these questions using the most rigorous methodologies possible, so the challenge is indeed a great one. The PNIRS is also unique in other aspects; in particular our emphasis on fostering our trainees. The ability to positively influence the scientific career development of the next generation of psychoneuroimmunologists is perhaps the greatest achievement of our society. This endeavor certainly pays off, and has been playing an essential role in our society's ability to develop and thrive. We are also unique in the superb personal social relationships among the society members, which are so important for the establishment of scientific collaborations that cross the boundaries of countries and disciplines. I hope to be worthy of the honor of leading this unique society and promise to do my best to promote it to yet higher peaks of scientific excellence.

Our last meeting in Dublin was a remarkable success. It was the biggest PNIRS meeting that we ever had in terms of the number of registrants, and the high levels of the science and the organization were just outstanding. We are indebted to the meeting's local organizer, Tom Connor, who did such a marvelous job, as well as to our outgoing President Rainer Straub, Secretary/Treasurer Rod Johnson, Executive Director Susan K. Solomon, Colm

Cunningham, who assisted Tom with the local organization, and the entire Program Committee, for arranging such an interesting, stimulating and enjoying meeting.

Plans for our upcoming meeting in Chicago, led by Jeff Woods, the local host and the PNIRS Program Committee, are well underway, and the program should be as exciting as ever. The meeting theme will be "PNI Mechanisms of Disease: From Pathophysiology to Prevention and Treatment". The short course preceding the meeting will be entitled: "Stress, Immunity, and Disease", comprised of a primer on issues related to stress and PNI, with review type lectures that deal with basic findings, experimental models, research design and future directions. The course will begin with an introductory overview on the neurobiology of stress and its implications for PNI by Steve Maier, and will include lectures on "stress and immunity in humans" by Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, "stress and immunity in experimental animal models" by Monika Fleshner, "stress and experimental models of cancer" by Shamgar Ben-Eliyahu, and "stress, cytokines, neuroplasticity and depression" by Raz Yirmiya. The title of the Presidential symposium is "The PsychoNeuroImmunological basis of neurological and psychiatric diseases". It will include lectures by Jau-Shyong Hong (NIH), who will talk on neuroinflammatory processes in Parkinson's disease, Tony Wyss-Coray (Stanford University), who will talk on neuroinflammatory processes in Alzheimer's disease, Paul Patterson (California Institute of Technology), who will talk on the PsychoNeuroImmunological basis of Schizophrenia, and Andrew H. Miller (Emory University), who will talk on the PsychoNeuroImmunological basis of Major depression.

We shall be particularly honored to have a keynote presentation from Virginia Sanders, who will give the Norman Cousins Award Lecture, as well as a lecture by Jonathan Kipnis, the recipient of the Robert Ader New Investigator Award. We shall be also honored to have keynote addresses from Kevin J. Tracey and Bruce S. McEwen, as well as an invited lecture from Karen Bulloch.

As always, we will continue our commitment to the trainees by providing trainee travel awards and multiple activities to foster trainee career development, including the senior faculty/trainee colloquium and numerous opportunities for trainees to give presentations in the Data Blitz and the oral presentation sessions.

I hope to see you all in Chicago!!!



Raz Yirmiya, Ph.D.

President, PNIRS