

## Reports from Recent Conferences

Please continue to send in reports from conferences, meetings, socials and events with a neuroethics connection. Questions? Let us know at [administrator@neuroethicssociety.org](mailto:administrator@neuroethicssociety.org)

### **Brain Matters: A conference report by Timothy Krahn**, Research Associate, Novel Tech Ethics, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, CANADA

This past September (24-26th) Novel Tech Ethics (as lead by Françoise Baylis) and The Neuroethics New Emerging Team (as lead by Jocelyn Downie) co-sponsored a conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia, CANADA entitled Brain Matters: New Directions in Neuroethics. Participants came from fifteen different countries distributed across four continents (Asia, Australia, Europe and North America) to discuss a broad range of topics as seen from the perspective of the many specialized disciplines involved in neuroethics, including representation from engineering, health law, medicine, neuroscience, nursing, philosophy, psychiatry, various social sciences and social work. One panel discussion addressed the ambiguities, uncertainties, and expectations for neurological treatments and enhancements, and another provided a snapshot of current developments and anticipated futures of neuroethics in Asia. Plenary sessions were balanced between philosophical talks from Walter Glannon and Neil Levy with more clinically-driven presentations by David Healy and James Bernat. Jonathan Marks echoed a theme common throughout the conference that "a healthy dose of neuroskepticism informed by science studies critiques is necessary if we are to understand the real ethical challenges neuroscience presents". Caroline Tait provided insight into how mental health care delivery for Indigenous peoples of Canada may involve modern neuro-interventions but that doing so, if to be effective and ethical, must give at least equal consideration to local Indigenous world views rather than being driven by top-down, Western ethical principles. Feedback on the conference was overwhelmingly positive: it seems that the diversity and number of participants (ca. 125), breadth of topics, ample time for

presentations (45 minutes), including fifteen minutes of protected time for discussion at each of the regular sessions, were structural features noted and greatly appreciated by a strong majority of respondents. For those interested, the American Journal of Bioethics, the Journal of Ethics in Mental Health and Neuroethics are planning to disseminate select papers forthcoming from this conference.

### **The symposium "Best Practices in Physiological Research: Ethics and Integrity" was presented at the 36th Congress of the International Union of Physiological Sciences (IUPS) in Kyoto, Japan, August 1, 2009, by Penny Moody-Corbett**, Ph.D.; Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies; Memorial University of Newfoundland, Faculty of Medicine.

The symposium was organized by the Ethics Committee of IUPS and addressed two specific topics: ethical practice using animals in physiological research and integrity and misconduct in research. The speakers included Dr. Colin Blake-more (Professor of Neuroscience, Universities of Oxford and Warwick, a distinguished member of the neuroscience community and prominent spokesperson for the use of animals in physiological research), Dr. Naoko Kagiya (Professor of Veterinary Medicine Hokkaido University and member of the Governing Board of the International Council for Laboratory Animal Science), Dr. Kim Barrett (Dean of Graduate Studies, University of California, San Diego, and Chair of the Publications Committee for the American Physiological Society) and Dr. Penny Moody-Corbett (Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland and Chair of the Ethics Committee of IUPS). Each pres-

entation was followed by a brief question and answer period with an opportunity for a broader discussion at the end of the symposium. The symposium was well received by an audience of international physiologists including a number of students.

### **When Neuroethicists and Bioethicists meet by Yashar Saghai**; Georgetown University, Kennedy Institute of Ethics; Washington, DC.

Neuroethics and bioethics have much in common, and when neuroethicists and bioethicists meet, odds are high that the conversation will be lively. This is what happened at this year's Annual Meeting of the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities in Washington, DC (October 15-18). A Neuroethics Affinity Group met and disseminated information about up-coming conferences in the field, followed by two mini presentations and discussions about the future of the interaction between neuroethicists and bioethicists inside the ASBH and beyond. Several panels or paper sessions were of particular interest to neuroethicists: definition of death; severe brain injury and sexuality; vulnerability, moral experience and decision-making; enhancement and disability; empirical approaches to morality; moral responsibility and the neuroscience of self-governance. Some sessions were focused on the relationship between brain/mind research and law/policy, such as a workshop on molecules, minds and the law, and a panel on libertarian paternalism in healthcare. Overall, the ASBH meeting was a welcome opportunity for bioethicists to discover how neuroethicists engage common issues, get a sense of the new questions that animate the growing and vibrant neuroethics community, and eventually join the Neuroethics Society!