

AMERICAN AUDITORY SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING MARCH 8–10, 2012

Anna Piotrowska, Artur Lorens

Institute of Physiology and Pathology of Hearing, Warsaw/Kajetany, Poland

About 400 participants gathered for the annual scientific and technology meeting of the American Auditory Society held in Scottsdale, Arizona, from 8 to 10 March this year. The American Auditory Society (AAS) was formed in 1974, although it was at first called the American Audiology Society. The purpose of the meetings is to translate laboratory knowledge into clinical practice. Distinguished speakers for 2012 included Drs James O. Phillips, Barbara Shinn-Cunningham, and Chris Turner.

The lecture by James Phillips covered vestibular prosthetic devices which can now be successfully implanted in humans. Electrical stimulation of the implant produces eye movements, suggesting that the device is providing head velocity input to the brain. With appropriate changes in stimulation parameters, slow phase eye movements can be controlled.

Barbara Shinn-Cunningham spoke on spatial perception. She reviewed the various ways that spatial hearing contributes to our ability to converse when there are competing sounds. She listed aging and hearing loss as factors that interact and negatively affect spatial auditory perception in everyday situations.

Chris Turner presented the practice and benefit of electric-acoustic stimulation in patients with high frequency hearing loss by using short (10 mm) electrodes.

The highlight of every meeting is the Carhart Memorial Lecture, which honors Raymond Carhart, the

father of audiology. The 2012 lecture was presented by Dr Judy Dubno, who described five audiometric phenotypes of age-related hearing loss: older-normal, pre-metabolic, metabolic, sensory, and metabolic plus sensory, where older-normal and metabolic are the youngest and oldest phenotypes, respectively. Another highlight was the AAS Life Achievement Award which was presented to Dr Arthur Boothroyd. In 2007 a researcher of Polish descent, Jozef Zwislocki, was granted the same prize.

A special session focused on the evidence base for clinical practice and included Michael Stewart, Ruth Bentler, David Moore, and Quentin Summerfield. This year's meeting also included a session on tinnitus named in honor of Jack Vernon and Mary Meikle. Jack Vernon passed away in 2010 and Mary Meikle in 2011 after making substantial contributions to our knowledge of tinnitus.

During the meeting 42 podium papers were presented, only two of which came from outside the US. One of these was presented by Artur Lorens from Institute of Physiology and Pathology of Hearing, Poland, who spoke on the benefit of partial deafness treatment.

A one-day poster session for trainees included 138 posters and provided a platform for the inter-disciplinary exchange of information. Students and residents had the opportunity to interact with experts from different fields. One poster from Institute of Physiology and Pathology of Hearing described the European initiative on hearing screening in school-age children and the EU Council Conclusions on



early detection and treatment of communication disorders in children, including the use of e-Health tools and innovative solutions.

The poster session was preceded by the invited Young Investigator Research Presentation, given by Dr. Konstantina Stankovic on "Hearing research at a crossroad – new challenges and opportunities". The uniqueness of the auditory pathway, as well as the future of hearing research, defined as "network in networks", was presented in an outstanding way and complemented with discussion of its practical implications for young researchers.

An annual event is the award for best article in *Ear & Hearing*. This time the award for best article in 2011 went to the group from University of Memphis, Tennessee, USA: Cox RM, Alexander GC, Johnson J, and Rivera I, for their paper "Cochlear dead regions in typical hearing aid candidates: prevalence and implications for use of high-frequency speech cues."

As usual during AAS meetings, the papers focused on current challenges and advances in hearing research. Speakers emphasized that opportunities for new therapies are coming from several new technologies, including sensing and imaging, electronics, bioengineering, genomics and proteomics, and regenerative medicine.

During our stay in Scottsdale we enjoyed both an outstanding scientific program with top-level lectures and the beautiful surroundings of the Sonoran Desert. We were also impressed with the unique and extraordinary museum of musical instruments, which was the venue for the social event. It was like a musical trip around the world, through cultures, countries, and civilizations.

So much to learn, experience, and see – it's worth going back.