

Report

IBRO NEUROSCIENCE COURSE

University of Lagos, Nigeria

July 18-26, 2007

Organisers:

Global Educational Initiative For Nigeria (GEIFON) *In Partnership With*
The University of Lagos, Nigeria.

Professor Anthony Ebeigbe, Executive Director, Global Educational Initiative for Nigeria
Prof. John Nicholls, International School for Advanced Studies (SISSA), Trieste, Italy
Professor Olusoga A. Sofola, Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Lagos.

The Visiting Lecture Team Program-International Brain Research Organization (VLTP-IBRO) Neuroscience course was held at the University of Lagos, Nigeria on July 18-26, 2007. This course is the second to be held in Nigeria – the first was held at the University of Benin, Benin City in 2000. The aim of this course was to acquaint participants with recent advances in neurobiology at both fundamental and clinical levels.

Arrivals:

All the invited lecturers arrived in Lagos as scheduled and were received personally at the airport, between 16th and 17th July, 2007.

The formal opening of the course on July 18, was chaired by Professor Ignatius Uvah, who represented the Executive Secretary of the Nigerian National Universities Commission. Other dignitaries present at the opening ceremony included the representative of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lagos, Professor Tolu Ogungbemi, Deans of Faculties, University Professors as well as members of the press.

Course Lecturers and organization:

The under-listed lecturers handled the course:

Prof. Alasdair Gibb, Department of Pharmacology, University College London, UK..

Prof. John Nicholls, Department of Neurobiology, International School for Advanced Studies (SISSA), Trieste, Italy.

Prof. Noreen Reist, Division of Neuroscience, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, USA.

Prof. David Weisblat, Department of Molecular and Cell Biology, University of California, Berkeley, CA, USA.

The 5th lecturer (Prof. Elaine Del Bel, Department of Physiology, University of Sao Paulo, Ribeirao Preto, Brazil) who was originally scheduled for the course, was unable to attend owing to flight-related travel difficulties.

The course consisted of thirty-five lectures, each lasting for about 50 minutes. The provision of handouts by the lecturers went a long way to boost students' interest in the course. Conferences were used for discussion of questions that arose from the lectures and consisted of small groups that rotated day by day to different lecturers. A unique feature of the conferences is that students received daily training on how to present 10 min. scientific talks and write abstracts on their own work, according to the format of international meetings. There were also discussions about how to seek pre- and postdoctoral training opportunities. My personal impression is that the students benefited immensely from the informal discussions – particularly, in respect of making enquiries about grants, studentships, fellowships, research equipment etc. The students' assessment of the course was by way of a simple questionnaire, which a number of them kindly completed. Overall, their comments were highly complimentary – some of their comments are reproduced at the end of this report.

Participants:

Students for the course were drawn from a wide range of disciplines. They included: Advanced Bio/Medical Students; Postgraduate Students; Resident Doctors/Consultants/Research Fellows in Teaching & Neuropsychiatric Hospitals/Research Institutes; Clinical Neurologists; Optometrists; Professors/Lecturers/Researchers in the Basic Medical Sciences, Pharmacists and Physiotherapists. Students were recruited from institutions across the entire country. 57 students registered and were active participants throughout the duration of the course.

Social Interactions:

A number of other avenues were created to enable students and lecturers to interact *seriously* but leisurely! There were regular Tea/Coffee breaks, daily. In addition, there was a cocktail party on day 1 of the course and a Dinner Party on the penultimate day of the course.

The lecturers also had the privilege of paying a courtesy call on the King of Lagos, whose reception was very warm.

Observations by the Visiting Team:

“Courses such as ours seem to fulfill a real need for students and teachers working in Nigerian universities in which little money is available for research. The desire to contribute by doing research is passionate in young and old, in experienced and naïve students in spite of the difficulties. We hope that our efforts may open new lines of thought about what is possible and what pathways could be followed in their careers. We formed the opinion that students became seriously interested in the material we discussed with them and were keen to build on what they had learned. Many expressed the desire to attend laboratory courses in neurobiology in order to learn new techniques We are extremely grateful to the students for their keen dedication and unrelenting hard work and to Prof Tony Ebeigbe, for his selfless and skillful organization.”

Acknowledgements:

Financial and material support was received from a number of corporate organizations. **We wish to specifically mention the assistance from the EDUCATION TRUST FUND, whose Chairperson (Chief (Mrs O. Olakunri) is a strong advocate for quality education and professional capacity building.**

Other sponsors are listed below:

- The University of Lagos – in particular, the Vice Chancellor (Professor Tolu Ogungbemi) and the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor O.A. Sofola – for their tremendous support for the various activities of the organizing committee.
- University of Benin Teaching Hospital.
- Psychiatric hospital Uselu, Benin city.
- Sea Petroleum and Gas Limited
- Ritsoil Petroleum and Gas Limited
- Nestle Foods Plc
- Finally, I wish to thank all members of the GLOBAL EDUCATION INITIATIVE FOR NIGERIA (GEIFON), the local organizing committee: A.A. Famodu, Nwokocho C. R., Ifedayo Ajayi, Philo Adozi – for their wonderful support.

Recommendation:

Considering the success of the course, it will be highly beneficial to have follow-up programmes:

- A practical course, specially designed to demonstrate the use of minimal facilities for neuroscience teaching and research is strongly recommended for consideration.
- A Basic/Clinical Neuroscience course is desirable, to acquaint more of our clinical colleagues with current trends in the Neurosciences and their application to the understanding and management of diseases of the nervous system.

Professor A.B. Ebeigbe
Executive Director, GEIFON

August 9, 2007

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