

The Teratology Society Newsletter

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Letter from the President

Thomas Knudsen

As Teratology Society members, we need to keep asking ourselves how we can move the Society forward toward our purpose, which is to foster exchange of information relating to congenital (birth) defects including their nature, cause, mechanism and prevention. As many of you are already aware, the Teratology Society recently published a book titled: Teratology Primer, in order to raise awareness about the field. This concise resource provides information and references with a collection of current topics in birth defects written by experts in their areas of specialty. Although intended for students to understand the career choices available in the field of teratology, the Teratology Society has made this book free of charge for college students, medical and graduate students, and residents. Supplies are limited so please request copies of the Teratology Primer for your students/residents. It may be ordered online at http://teratology.org/pubs/order_primer.asp.

The Teratology Society can be an educational force now and in the future. Goals in our recent strategic plan address the engagement of membership, strengthening

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Working Groups Recommendations

Working Group Chairpersons

The Chairpersons of the Strategic Planning Working Groups met by conference call to discuss what their groups had been doing in response to the charges of the Oversight Committee. These charges were: 1- to identify their 3 top priorities, 2- to identify timelines, deliverables and feedback mechanisms to determine if the priorities have been met, 3- to update the Work Diagram developed during the Strategic Planning Meeting, and 4- to evaluate if any changes are needed in Committees that will be working on these priorities. Below is a summary of what the groups have been working on. This will be the focus of a session to be held on Monday, June 30 at 4:30 PM; be sure to attend to find out the latest information and how you can be a part of it!

Visibility WG: Janine Polifka and Melissa Tassinari

The Visibility Working Group agreed that there were two groups that the Society wanted to reach: 1) the general public and 2) students and professionals. To achieve more visibility with these two groups, the Visibility Working Group has identified three top outputs:

1. Revamp the website - revise the content of the website so that it is more explicit as to what teratologists do and who the Teratology Society is. Increase the number of links to other pages on the web. Since OTIS interfaces with the general public, the link to OTIS should be made more visible on the website. Result: The website has undergone considerable revision and is now ready for the Visibility WG to focus on the content on the website to meet their objectives.
2. Partner with National Birth Defects Prevention

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the visibility of our Society as the premier voice for advancement of prenatal and child health, defining our scientific identity and developing multi-disciplinary goals and year-round dissemination of important knowledge, and finally an annual meeting that showcases the value of the multi-disciplinary nature of the Society. Clearly, the collective enthusiasm, energy and wisdom of our Society will be needed to implement these important strategic goals. Education is key: I believe we have at times been too narrowly focused on our own discipline and this perhaps has reduced visibility for teratology at a critical time when we must attract students who might be engaged in other sciences. Igniting the exchange of information relating to congenital (birth) defects calls on us all to broaden the educational emphasis – an approach that fits neatly within our organization’s purpose and long-term goal - and promote an educational emphasis beyond our traditional realm.

I thank you for the opportunity to serve the Society as President in 2007-08 and look forward to working with you and serving the Society in the future. ■



Annual Meeting Update

Tina Chambers and Barbara Hales

The 2008 annual meeting is fast approaching. The program offers an exciting cross-disciplinary array of education courses, symposia, special events, and platform and poster sessions, all in a California coastal venue that's guaranteed to provide a relaxing respite where members can reconnect with friends and colleagues. If you have not yet registered, it's not too late to do so - regular registration continues to be available through June 23 at <http://teratology.org> or alternatively on-site, once the meeting begins. In addition, there's still time to submit a late-breaking abstract. Through May 30, abstracts can be submitted directly to the Society's Business Office c/o Becca Rhame at brhame@teratology.org. We look forward to seeing you all in June in Monterey!

You will want to mark the dates for our 2009 conference, from June 26 to July 1, 2009 on your calendar right now. The program promises to be exciting and the venue will compete with Monterey, even though some of you may be skeptical. The Wyndham Rio Mar Resort is a 500-acre tropical resort on magnificent Rio Mar Beach, located on the Northeast corner of Puerto Rico. It is adjacent to El Yunque Caribbean National Forest, which covers more than 28,000 acres in the Luquillo Mountains and is home to more than 240 species of trees, 1000 species of plants, and 60 species of birds. This smoke-free hotel offers a wonderful family environment and activities for all interests. It features one mile of white sandy beach; two championship golf courses, putting green and driving range; 13 tennis courts; Mandra Spa; an extensive health club; nature trails; casinos; and an array of exciting water sports including jet skiing, snorkeling and scuba diving. But even with all this to offer, we are confident that you will not want to miss out on the science! ■

Awareness Campaigns - January is National Birth Defects and Prevention Month. We can partner with other groups that have events during this month. Possible resources include CDC, NCBDDD, MOD, NBDPN. Tina has recently represented the society at the NBDPN meeting in Washington. Result: This is an activity that can begin now but will be ongoing. Planning for participation in January will be addressed by this WG and the PAC.

3. Student Training/Embryology Courses. The Teratology Society needs to investigate partnering with groups like The Academic Edge for the development and distribution of training materials related to teratology and teratogen avoidance. A major resource for this activity is the Teratology Primer. This is a longer term set of activities.

The Work Diagram has been updated, and the WG has recently evaluated the role and charge of the Public Affairs Committee and has suggested some revisions in the PAC charter to be discussed by the PAC.

Communications: Ed Carney and George Daston

The top priority of the WG had been the re-design of the website. The charge of the WG had a high degree of overlap with the Website Committee. The WG will provide other top priority topics from the discussions that have occurred within the group. Result: The revised website will be rolled out at the June meeting.

The Work Diagram will be updated and available for the June Meeting. There were no changes needed in the structure of the Website Committee.

Membership: Barbara Abbott and Kok-Wah Hew

This is probably the largest WG with many members who were not at the Strategic Planning Meeting. From the call held by the group the three top priorities are

1. Outreach and recruitment: proposals include design and presentation of CE courses at other society meetings. This may require a separate committee to be assembled.

2. Engaging members: proposal to look closely at current committee memberships and through selection process or ad hoc appointments, make sure each committee has a 'senior' member, a new member [< 5 yrs membership] and a student. Also look to leverage the members who volunteer to be on committees.

3. Member retention: Focus of discussion for this priority has been on the number of emeritus and soon-to-be emeritus members of the society.

The Work Diagram will be updated for the June meeting. The WG will provide its recommendations for the structure and charge of the current Membership Committee. Result: By-Laws changes will be presented to the membership at the June meeting. One proposal that may require an opinion of the By-laws committee is to have appointments of incoming committee members made by the incoming President before the June meeting so those individuals could attend the committee meeting at the Annual Meeting.

Annual Meeting: Sonja Rasmussen and Tina Chambers

The top priorities for the WG were:

1. Integration of planning of the 3 societies
2. Addition of CME credits
3. Increased engagement by the outside speakers with the meeting and membership.

Result: This WG has acted on many of the suggestions for the Annual Meeting and have incorporated them into this year's agenda.

The Work Diagram will be updated for the June meeting. The program committee is a yearly ad hoc committee so there are no by-law implications. However, if longer term integration of the 3 societies is undertaken, a change may be needed in this committee, or another committee may have to be formed.

Shared Scientific Identity: Elaine Faustman and Shelley Tyl

This WG has begun its discussion of priorities. The Work Diagram will be updated for the June meeting. An emerging proposal from this WG is the possible need for a Science committee to carry out the WG priorities. The suggestion is that this group will be formed as an ad hoc committee with a limited duration [3 yrs] with a review to determine whether to make is a standing committee. ■

You're Invited!!!

What: Strategic Planning Session Update

When: Monday, June 30 4:30 PM

Why: Find out what these groups have been doing and how you can become a part of the exciting future of the Teratology Society!

“Mentor Core” Update

Elaine Faustman

Several people have asked during the year about the Mentor Core interviews that were taped at the 2007 Annual Meeting. The project is alive and well! As you may remember, this project is similar to NPR's “Story Core” which consists of interviews with family members and friends. We will continue to interview Society members and welcome you to interview your mentor and/or others that have influenced you in our Society at the Annual Meeting in Monterey. We hope to compile a series of video clips for our anniversary celebration to document the roles that our Teratology members have played in the history and future of our Society.

If you would like to do one of these interviews, there will be a sign-up sheet to schedule “booth” time to run a 5–7 minute interview. We will provide some example questions that you may want to use to focus these interviews. Groups are welcome as well as one-on-one interviews. ■

Redesigned Website

Website Committee

The Teratology Society website will soon have a new look and new organization. Some of the drop-down menus have changed, and there will be a Members Only section. Other changes include separate pages for each Committee and for Council that will keep members up to date on the activities of these groups. We hope to have many of these changes ready by the Annual Meeting. So when you return from the Meeting, take another trip around the newly designed Teratology Society website!

Newsletter Format Change

As a part of our website redesign, the format for the newsletter will also be changing! Starting in August, every 2 – 3 months, you'll get an email with brief updates on Council and Committee activities. You'll be able to link to areas on the website where you can find more information on any of the topics listed. We hope this will make it easier for you to keep up with what's going on in the Society! Let us know if you like it. ■