

reviewed the role of estrogen in memory process, S. ThyagaRajan (Kattankulathur) discussed the neuroimmunomodulation of splenic sympathetic noradrenergic nerve fibres by estrogen in rats.

In the plenary session Chanda Kulkarni (Bangalore) spoke on epilepsy update. Birendra Mallick (New Delhi) explained the role of calcium in REM sleep deprivation-induced increase in Na-K ATPase activity in the rat brain. Mahdi Hasan (Lucknow) presented a comprehensive study on the aluminum-induced, lipofuscin-associated apoptosis and macroglial proliferation in the old rat frontal cortex and basal nucleus. R. H. Singh (Varanasi) spoke on ayurveda and brain aging with special reference to Medhya Rasayana therapy. In a special session, Kanungo spoke on neuroscience research in BHU, Varanasi. M. C. Arunan (Mumbai) delivered a thought-provoking talk on 'Innovative teaching: Learning through hands-on research in neurosciences and developing simple model systems to ask sophisticated questions'.

Besides the presentation of scientific papers, a separate session on continued medical education entitled 'Recent advances in epilepsy' was conducted for students. In order to provide a basic understanding and stimulate interest in neurosciences, a special interactive session on brain awareness was organized for school students in collaboration with the Varanasi chapter of the National Academy of Sciences, India. This was attended by students of 10 + 2 level, undergraduates, postgraduates, research scholars and teachers, besides fellows and members of the Academy. It was co-ordinated by Anita Dey (Principal, WH Smith Memorial School, Sagra, Varanasi). About 300 students with their teachers from 15 different higher secondary schools of Varanasi participated in this session. In the beginning, Thakur welcomed the participants and explained that the aim of the event was to ignite the minds of enthusiastic students and make them aware of excitations and emerging challenges in neurosciences. Vijayalak-

shmi Ravindranath delivered a lucid and inspiring lecture on the structure, function and diseases of the brain, the most complex organ of the human body. Her lecture provoked students to ask a series of questions. The answers were provided by a panel of neuroscientists consisting of Tandon, Blakemore, Kanungo, Seth and Vijayalakshmi Ravindranath. At the end, all the students were given participation certificates.

Above all, the conference successfully highlighted the recent advances in emerging areas of neurosciences and pointed out that much of the brain functions and disorders still remain a mystery and need to be explored. The 26th conference of the IAN will be held in 2008 at Cochin.

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MEETING REPORT

Fungal taxonomy*

An All-India Coordinated Project on Taxonomy (AICOPTAX) was launched in 2007 by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), Government of India, to promote research on taxonomy. Work on fungal taxonomy was distributed to six centres of the country, namely Osmania University, Hyderabad; Madras University, Chennai; Goa University, Goa; R. D. University, Jabalpur; Christ Church College, Kanpur, and The Energy and Resources Institute, New Delhi. Hyderabad being the coordinating centre. The fungal group at the Kanpur centre is currently working on keratinophilic fungi and related dermatophytes.

In order to strengthen and disseminate knowledge on fungal taxonomy and train students in the taxonomy of fungi, a training workshop was arranged according to the MoEF research interface programme. The ten selected participants

were mostly doing their postgraduation in different disciplines such as botany, microbiology, life sciences, environmental sciences and biochemistry and a few were Ph D students.

The training course involved 28 inexpensive and easily implementable exercises. The training was started with the visualization of different fungal forms. Digital scanning of micro-cultures prepared for permanent fungal slides on polyvinyl alcohol and computer-aided measurements of fungal structures were conducted using available software. Visualization of fungi using a high resolution BX40 series Olympus trinocular microscope was a fascinating experience for the students. Different forms of fungi on culture media, hair, horns, hooves, nails, filter paper, cotton, seeds, dung, as well as phytopathogenic fungi were studied by the participants. The exact taxonomic position of some selected fungi were found using standard taxonomic features, including camera lucida, measurements and photomicrographs. The participants also became familiar with methods of

maintenance of fungal cultures as agar slants, water cultures, lyophilized cultures, dry herbarium and soil-hair cultures.

In addition to the practical exercises, elaborate lectures on classification of fungi, general methods of isolation of fungi and their purification, scope, function and exploitation of keratinophilic and non-dermatophytic keratinophilic fungi for utilization for the benefit of human beings were delivered. To make participants aware of the literature on the taxonomy of fungi, several monographs, books, reprints and electronically downloaded articles were displayed. Thus the young participants were able to identify at least some fungi using standard techniques. The training in taxonomy of different groups of fungi by experts may play a significant role in achieving the goal.

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*A report on the Training Workshop on Fungal Taxonomy held during 26–31 March 2007 at the Department of Botany, Christ Church College, Kanpur.