Complexity of pain at the heart of the 13th World Congress on Pain in Montréal

More than 6,000 leading professionals came together for the advancement of pain research and treatment

Montréal, August 31, 2010 - The International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) held a press conference yesterday at the Palais des congrès de Montréal to support the launch of the 13th edition of the World Congress on Pain. This initiative brings together more than 6,000 of the world's leading professionals in the field of pain research and treatment, from across Canada and around the world.

"Pain management is not a single problem of just developing a better drug, it's developing a better strategy, said IASP President Gerald F. Gebhart, PhD, opening the press conference. "Pain is much more complex than researchers have thought in the past. We need to better understand the mechanisms related to pain in order to develop targeted therapies."

"Everything current in pain research and pain treatment will be discussed at this meeting," said Jeff Mogil, Chair of the Scientific Program Committee of this year's Congress, which features 73 topical workshops and symposia, 12 plenary lectures and two special lectures.

Mogil, a pain researcher at McGill University, described some of the Congress highlights, including a variety of plenary sessions that present leading-edge information on pharmacotherapy of chronic pain; cancer pain and palliative care; the link between pain modulation via the medullary raphe and obesity; diagnosis and assessment of neuropathic pain; impact of exercise on rehabilitation; orofacial pain; acupuncture; neonatal pain; acute pain; the link between genetics and sensation; cognitive-behavioral therapy; and research on clinical pain using imaging.

"The list of topics and disciplines studied by researchers at the Congress makes it clear that pain is immensely complex," Mogil added. "Considering pain involves so many different therapeutic areas, pain can be considered the number one health problem."

"IASP is the world's largest, most international, and most multidisciplinary organization focused specifically on pain," Mogil explained. "Data collection and new developments are moving so fast that IASP leaders decided to hold the Congress every two years rather than three."

Manon Choinière, Chair of the Local Arrangements Committee for the Congress, stated that she was happy to announce not only the positive economic impact of the Congress, but also on the promotion of pain research. She said it was important to raise awareness around pain in general as, in Canada, six million people suffer from moderate to severe chronic pain[1] and the cost to the economy is an estimated $6 billion per year – mostly due to lost productivity and healthcare utilization.[2]

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[1] Todd 2007
[2] Nanos 2007-2008

“The best current estimate is that 20 per cent of people will suffer from chronic pain at any time in their life, while 50 per cent of people will suffer from pain for more than three months,” concluded Mogil. “Chronic pain is more prevalent in women and increases with age. If there is any field of biomedicine that will develop sex specific treatments, it is pain.” Mogil also predict that, one day, we will see “pink pills” and “blue pills.”

“When the original injury heals, or when the disease is gone but the pain stays, we cannot talk about symptoms anymore. It becomes chronic pain – a disease by itself,” Mogil mentioned, discussing chronic pain and its psychological implications.

“Chronic pain is subjective, but it is not a myth. It has many psychological impacts and is adding anxiety – and sometimes depression – to the physical pain afflicting patients,” added Eija Kalso, President-elect of IASP, referring to an earlier statement.” She also asserted that, in pain management, more and more attention is paid to lifestyle factors, such as obesity, nutritional deficiency, the use of alcohol or drugs, and exercise.

Gebhart closed the press conference insisting on the necessity of understanding that pain is very complex, and still remains undertreated today.

TODAY’S IASP PICKS

8:15 a.m.
Plenary session (PL05) – *Diagnosis and Assessing Neuropathic Pain: The Sage of Clinical Tools* with Didier Bouhassira

10:45 a.m.
Topical symposium (TS22) – *Cannabinoids for the Treatment of Pain: An Update* with Pierre Beaulieu, Daniele Piomelli and Terhi Nurmikko

Topical workshop (TW26) – *The Pain Clinician as an Expert Witness* with George Mendelson, Carolyn Arnold, Richard E Atkinson and Harold Merskey

Topical symposium (TS28) – *Military Pain Care: Research, Policy and Practice* with Robert Kerns, Laura McGhee and Dominic Aldington

1:45 p.m.
Special lecture (DL01) – *Advancing Pain and Palliative Care Globally: Challenges and Opportunities* with Kathleen Foley

Plenary session (PL06) – *Acupuncture Analgesia: Consensus and Controversies* with Ji-Sheng Han

4:00 p.m.
Topical Symposium (TS42) – *Integrating Complementary and Alternative Medicine into Chronic Pain Management* with Dominik Irnich, Richard Harris and Mike Cummings

REGISTRATION
Journalists, with valid press credentials, may register for free onsite at the Registration Desk.

Congress opening hours are:
August 30 – September 2:
7:00 AM - 6:00 PM

MEDIA ROOM
Palais des congrès de Montréal, 1001, place Jean-Paul-Riopelle, Montréal, Québec. The media room is located on the 5th floor, room 525-A. To schedule an interview with an IASP spokesperson or Congress presenter, or for more information about the Congress, please contact:

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