President’s Message

By Helen Richardson,
BRAINet President

Greetings BRAINet Members.

This month I have a request of you. Your Board members have heard from BRAINet members that you enjoy the lecture summaries we have included in The Synapse for several years. While your Board members have been happy to provide these notes, we are no longer able to do so consistently. Therefore, we are reaching out to you, our members, to request your assistance. If several BRAINet members were interested in sharing this responsibility with Board members, we would be able to continue the practice of including lecture summaries in The Synapse. If you are someone who is willing to take on the task of summarizing luncheon lectures from time to time, please contact Kate Stout at stoutk@ohsu.edu.

Thank you for your continued involvement with and support of disseminating the latest information about the brain through BRAINet in support of the OHSU Brain Institute’s researchers.

Best regards,

Helen Richardson, President

January Lecture Luncheon Summary

The Neurobiology of Happiness
By Tarvez Tucker, M.D.

Dr. Tucker gave us an entertaining and informative look at what she’s learned about happiness as a neurointenstivist. From brain chemicals to neuronal circuits of reward to gut hormones, Dr. Tucker provided a broad overview of what the research says about perceptions of happiness. Most importantly, she gave us five strategies to happiness:

1) Write your mentor a letter. Deliver it in person and read it aloud.
2) Read and re-read a good book early Saturday morning in bed.
3) Buy something for someone else for no special occasion.
4) Don’t compare yourself to others.
5) Concentrate and appreciate one good friend you’ve known the longest.

She ended her lecture with a touching quote from the actor Robin Williams:

“Take my hand. Are you scared? Maybe together we can find a few laughs along the way.”
February Lecture Luncheon

Our lecture luncheon will be on Monday, February 20, at 11:30 a.m. at the Multnomah Athletic Club. Dr. Peter Spencer will discuss “Mysterious Epidemics of Nods and Fits in East African Children.” Dr. Spencer is a professor of neurology in OHSU’s School of Medicine, and the founding director of the OHSU Global Health Center.

11:30 Registration and Lunch Served
12:00-1:00 Lecture

To register and pre-pay to secure your reservation (you can renew your membership at the same time!), please visit:

https://goo.gl/nc0Eil

Registration will close at midnight on Wednesday, February 15.

This month we will be served Pan-Fried Trout with Hazelnut Chimichurri.

Please note that this date is President’s Day.

Brain in the News:
Spatial Navigation

by George Ivan Smith, BRAINet member

British researchers used a virtual reality game, Sea Hero Quest, in one of the largest psychology experiments ever conducted online, according to Moheb Costandi, Dec. 1, 2016, in Dana.org News.

They reported their surprising results at the 46th annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience. They found spatial navigation ability declines with age, differs between women and men, and among people in different countries. And the game might be developed as a clinical tool to diagnose early stage Alzheimer's.

Hugo Spiers, Univ. College, London, who led the study, said they got 2.4 million downloads in four months.

The game’s tasks test three navigational abilities: way-finding (how we orient ourselves), path integration (how we estimate distance and direction) and working spatial memory (while we move around), with >75 levels of increasing difficulty, plus nine optional questions that collect demographic data.

In early adulthood, spatial navigation abilities begin to decline, and steadily continue declining. Memory remains relatively intact until 60s, then start declining. Path integration ability begins steady decline around age 20.

Most surprising, researchers found that spatial navigation abilities differ among people who live in different countries. “Our data clearly show Nordic countries have the best navigators. And we’d really like to know why,” said Spiers.

Mapping changes in spatial navigation across time may help in diagnosing Alzheimer’s at its early stages. Spatial disorientation is one of the earliest signs of the disease as seen by early-stage patients commonly wandering outside late at night and getting lost.

http://www.dana.org/News/Mapping_Spatial_Navigation_Abilities/
Volunteer Opportunities for Members

We have several interesting events coming up this spring. BRAINet members are invited to participate for free as volunteers helping to check in registrants, provide information about BRAINet, and act as information portals. Please contact Kate Stout (stoutk@ohsu.edu) if you are interested. There are limited spaces available.

**Brain Awareness Season: Brain Fair**
Saturday, March 11, OMSI
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (shifts available)
- Staff the informational table.
- Staff the BRAINet table.
- Interact with the kids!

**Brain Awareness Season: Teacher Workshop**
Saturday, March 18, Collaborative Life Science Building, South Waterfront
8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. (shifts available)
- Staff the informational table.
- Check-in registrants.
- Free lunch!

**Brain Awareness Season Lecture Series**
(see the following page for dates), Newmark Theatre
5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
- Staff the BRAINet, OBI, book and chocolate sales tables.
- Act as informational portal for registrants and other volunteers.
- Attend the lectures for free!
The Criminal Brain

MARCH 20

Octavio Choi, M.D., Ph.D.
Director, Forensic Evaluation Service, Oregon State Hospital
Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, Oregon Health & Science University

Touch: The Science of Hand, Heart and Mind

MARCH 27

David Linden, Ph.D.
Professor of Neuroscience, the Solomon H. Snyder Department of Neuroscience, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

Sleep, Memory and Dreams: Putting it all together

APRIL 4

Robert Stickgold, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School
Director, Center for Sleep and Cognition
Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center

BRAINet Contacts:

Kate Stout – Program Coordinator
503.494.0885 stoutk@ohsu.edu

Helen Richardson – President of BRAINet
gsgram@comcast.net

Nancy DeGraw – Membership Chair
njdegraw@msn.com

www.ohsubrain.com