

International Congress on Schizophrenia Research

Introduction

Although schizophrenia is considered one of the most serious psychiatric illnesses, at many times during the last century it has been relegated to the background. Focus on schizophrenia research, patient care, and connections with the family members of a person who suffers from schizophrenia began to change during the 1980s. Looking back, several events propelled this change, including the initiation of the Winter Workshop on Schizophrenia Research, the emergence of NAMI as an advocacy and support group for families with a schizophrenic member, the National Plan for Schizophrenia Research initiated by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), and the International Congress on Schizophrenia Research (ICOSR). The ICOSR held its first meeting in 1987 in order to provide a venue for active investigators in schizophrenia research. Nearly every attendee provided a poster, paper, or plenary presentation with the result that the meeting was characterized by the establishment of new collaborations and a wish for the Congress to continue.

Since that time, the goal of the first meeting has remained the focus of the ICOSR—a venue for the active investigator. An extension of this goal has been to attract a broad range of investigators from the fields of neuroscience, cognitive neuroscience, basic and clinical psychopharmacology, psychosocial interventions, and genetics. Thus, participation is broad ranging and stimulating. Past meetings have been characterized by the extension of results from basic science to the clinical testing arena as well as the investigation of basic underpinnings of reports from the fields of psychopharmacology and neuropsychology.

At the time of the initiation of the ICOSR, there was consensus that too few young faculties had taken an interest in the field of schizophrenia research. Thus, the Young Investigator Program has been a part of all the ICOSR meetings. During the last 3 meetings, the Young Investigator Program has been supported by the NIMH, to whom the organizers express their gratitude. A recent assessment of the recipients of the Young Investigator Awards has revealed that numerous of today's leaders in the field, presenters at the ICOSR, and the mentors

of recent Young Investigator Award winners have been initially supported by the Congress.

Because schizophrenia is a worldwide illness, the original meeting attracted investigators from outside the United States. The organizers have been pleased to welcome an ever-increasing number of schizophrenia scientists from around the world. For example, at the meeting held in Savannah, Georgia, in 2005, the majority of attendees were from outside the United States and represented more than 45 different countries. The establishment of collaborations has, therefore, extended beyond the boundaries of contingent universities to international programs aimed at solving the problems facing people with schizophrenia.

With the growth of interest in schizophrenia research and the ICOSR, has come the challenge of dissemination of the results presented at the meeting. The ICOSR has been pleased to collaborate with *Schizophrenia Bulletin* and *Schizophrenia Research* in the publication of abstracts from the meeting. These collaborations allowed for a useful compendium for attendees and distribution to subscribers and libraries around the world.

As the International Congress on Schizophrenia Research has expanded from a group of 175 initial delegates to larger than 1500 active investigators, support for the meeting has needed to expand as well. The organizers wish to acknowledge several very instrumental supporters of the Congress, including the NIMH, the William K. Warren Foundation, several very faithful pharmaceutical companies for unrestricted grants to the Congress, the University of Maryland's MPRC, the University of Texas at Southwestern, and the University of Minnesota. The organizers recognize that the financial and administrative support of the groups mentioned above are only a part of the picture of the sustenance of the ICOSR. The most valuable resource for the Congress over the years has been the enthusiasm and careful preparation made by the active investigators attending the meeting. Their excitement for their work, their wish to share and stimulate their colleagues, and their participation with the Young Investigators makes the ICOSR a meeting that is always highly anticipated.

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