

photos on the label!

The closing event of the workshop was a boat-trip on the Danube, which has its source in the West and a wide mouth in the East. The Workshop in Budapest upheld the established tradition of previous workshops and provided young scientists from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union a unique opportunity to discuss their research with colleagues from Europe. The most rewarding experience for the

organizers was that students and staff from all over Europe met and interacted so effectively. Several of the younger participants have already made contacts to develop collaboration with leading laboratories in their field.

Finally, the success of this Workshop was largely due to Imre's excellent organizational skills and the help he received from Franciska Morlin and Zita Horváth, the local conference company!

The full programme of the Workshop, including the abstracts of the lectures and posters, is available at:

<http://www.physoc.org/international>

Additional photographs of the Workshop are available from:

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/depsta/biomedical/hungary>

Giovanni E. Mann
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Neuroscience Workshop in Romania

Bucharest was the venue for the latest Physiological Society Workshop from 23–25 September. The theme – *Ischaemic Hypoxia in the Brain: Experimental Methods and Basic Mechanism* – attracted over 40 students, mainly from Romania and other Eastern European countries but with a sprinkling from the UK, with some students making heroic journeys to be there.

Speakers and workshop participants were welcomed on the evening of 23 September by Leon Zagrean and David Brown and treated to a buffet and congenial get together at the 'Carol Davilla' University of Medicine and Pharmacy. The University, which was founded in the mid 18th century, sports a magnificent entrance hall, off which lies an ornate, semi-circular tiered lecture theatre embellished with a carved ballustrade, splendid ceiling mouldings highlighted in gold and a huge chandelier.

A team of seven speakers from the UK and three from Romania filled the mornings with lectures devoted to considerations of some of the experimental methods used to study the effects of ischemia/hypoxia on brain function. Speakers highlighted their successes with the techniques used in their own labs, but were careful to point out limitations and potential pitfalls as well. Emil Toescu's summing up of his

presentation on methods for investigating mitochondrial function using fluorescent dyes was particularly succinct – 'measuring free radicals is a bitch' – this may have lost something in translation! Other topics on offer included the use of brain slices to investigate activity – related dilatation (Thelma Lovick), methods of inducing experimental cerebral ischaemia in rodents and assessment of subsequent brain damage (Mhairi Macrae), stereological measurement (Mircea Oprica) and calcium imaging (Alex Verkhratsky). On day 2, Paul Kemp discussed cloning and expression of K⁺ channels and how to test their responses to acute and chronic hypoxia. This was followed by talks on the use of organotypic brain slices to model ischaemia-induced neuronal changes (Ashley Pringle), the use of adenosine microsensors to measure purine release during ischaemia (Bruno Frenguelli) and how changes in the EEG might be used as an index of recovery from ischaemic insults (Mihai Moldovan). The neurosurgeon Vlad Ciurea offered us tips for 'perfect surgery' and numerous examples of his expertise in treating vascular and tumoural lesions in patients.

After lunch there was an early afternoon poster session followed by lab work until the evening dinner. Students chose from a wide range of practical demonstrations that

included methods for inducing ischaemia *in vivo* and *in vitro*, assessment of neuronal damage, patch clamp techniques, calcium measuring, immunohistochemistry, immunoblotting and more. These students did not rest!

What do students get out of a workshop like this? We must await the analysis of the exit questionnaires to get the full picture. However, a straw poll I conducted during the tea breaks and over dinner revealed many things. They really liked the practicals, especially seeing new techniques, and felt that they will now have a better appreciation of related literature. They found the lectures hard work but informative and they particularly appreciated speakers who went slowly. There are other benefits that are less tangible. They met other students with similar interests – a great morale booster. They listened to experienced speakers who mounted slick presentations and kept to time. They discovered that senior scientists need not be distant figures and were surprised by the friendliness and informality of the UK speakers when 'off duty'! And importantly, they experienced a well organised meeting. Ana-Maria Zagrean (Bucharest) must take most of the credit for this. She did a splendid job, thinking of everything and making it all happen.

Thelma Lovick