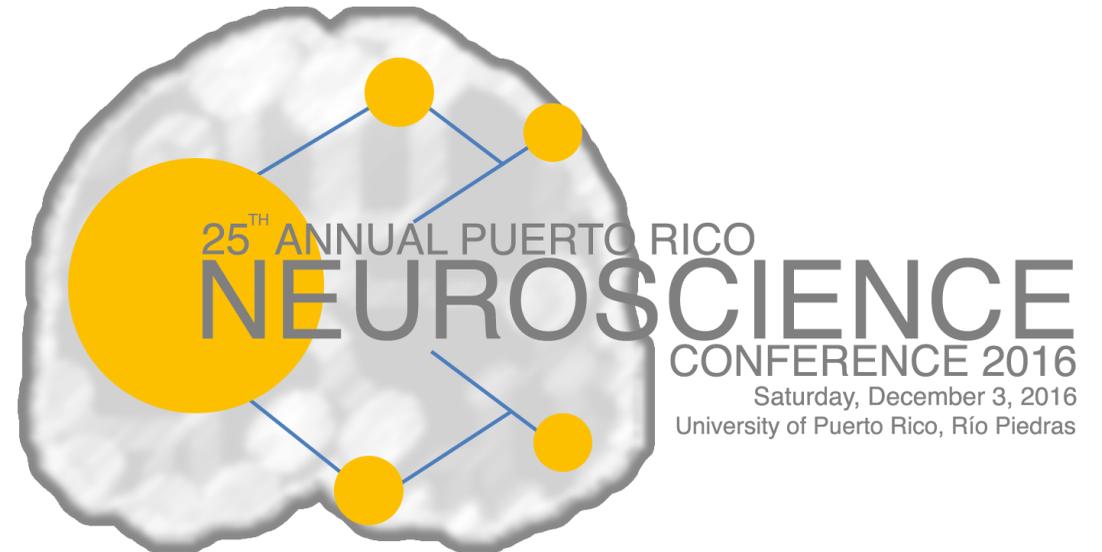




25th anniversary
Puerto Rico Neuroscience Conference.
Pre-conference -Recognition ceremony
University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras
Friday, December 2, 2016



Program

5:00 PM-6:00 PM

Registration

6:00 PM- 6:15 PM

Welcoming Remarks

Dra. Carmen S. Maldonado-Vlaar
President, Puerto Rico Neuroscience Conference

Dr. Carlos Gonzalez-Vargas, Dean
College of Natural Sciences
University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras

6:15 PM -7:00 PM

Recognition Ceremony for Puerto Rico Neuroscience Conference's founders

Dr. Vesna Eterovic, Dr. Pedro Ferchmin, Dr. Richard Hann and Dr. Richard Orkand

Dr. Gladys Escalona de Motta
"Dr. Jose Del Castillo's presence in the Puerto Rico Neuroscience Conference"

Dr. Carmen S. Maldonado-Vlaar, Dr. Astrid Zayas-Santiago, Dr. Yancy Ferrer-Acosta
"The four founders of PRN: Pioneers in Neuroscience"

Dr. Mark Miller
Director Institute of Neurobiology
"Remembering Richard Orkand"

7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Social event



The poster features a background of a neuron with glowing blue and green filaments. In the upper center, there is a stylized brain with a network of yellow nodes and blue lines. The text is overlaid on this background.

25th ANNUAL PUERTO RICO
NEUROSCIENCE
CONFERENCE 2016
Saturday, December 3, 2016
University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras

**25th Annual
Puerto Rico
Neuroscience
Conference**

Saturday, December 3, 2016
University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus
San Juan, Puerto Rico

¡Gracias!

First, I would like to take this opportunity to specially thank Dr. Kenira Thompson, Dean of Research of the Ponce Health Sciences University for co-sponsoring this special recognition event for our conference founders and neuroscience community. We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to Dr. Jose E. Garcia-Arraras, Professor of Biology and Director of the NeuroID program for his leadership and collaboration on the organization of the events related to our annual Conference. Also, many thanks to Dr Astrid Zayas and Dr. Yancy Ferrer from UCC for their assistance in preparing the memorabilia and photos included in the slide show, ordering the gifts and their continuous enthusiasm. To the other members of the organizing committee, Dr. Devin Muller from Ponce Health Sciences University and Dr. Jacqueline Flores from UPR-Medical Sciences Campus for their amazing support throughout these very busy months preparing for the main event. To all our sponsors we thank you for your important financial support. Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Marimar Velazquez, all our NeuroID students (specially Paola Figueroa and Gian Carlo Molina), Zobeida Diaz and all our iINAS staff for an amazing job in the organization and logistics of this great event.

Carmen Maldonado Vasquez



Dr. Vesna Eterovic

*Distinguished Research Professor
Departments of Biochemistry and Neuroscience
Universidad Central del Caribe*

Dr. Vesna Eterovic current research focuses on the preclinical development of 4R-cembranoid, a first in class neuroprotective and anti-inflammatory drug. Dr. Eterovic and collaborators demonstrated that 4R-cembranoid (4R), a compound isolated from tobacco, prevented neuronal death and displayed anti-inflammatory properties. Thus 4R is a promising source of therapeutics for many clinical areas, including stroke, Parkinson disease (PD), Alzheimer disease, AIDS and NeuroAIDS, and organophosphate poisoning (OP). These studies aim at establishing the 4R pharmacophore for neuroprotective activity, using in vitro models of OP, PD and stroke, natural and semisynthetic 4R analogues, and pharmacophore modeling. Since 4R target is the $\alpha 7$ nicotinic acetylcholine receptor, parallel studies endeavor to determine the 4R binding sites on this receptor using co-crystallization, site-directed mutagenesis, and patch-clamp electrophysiology.

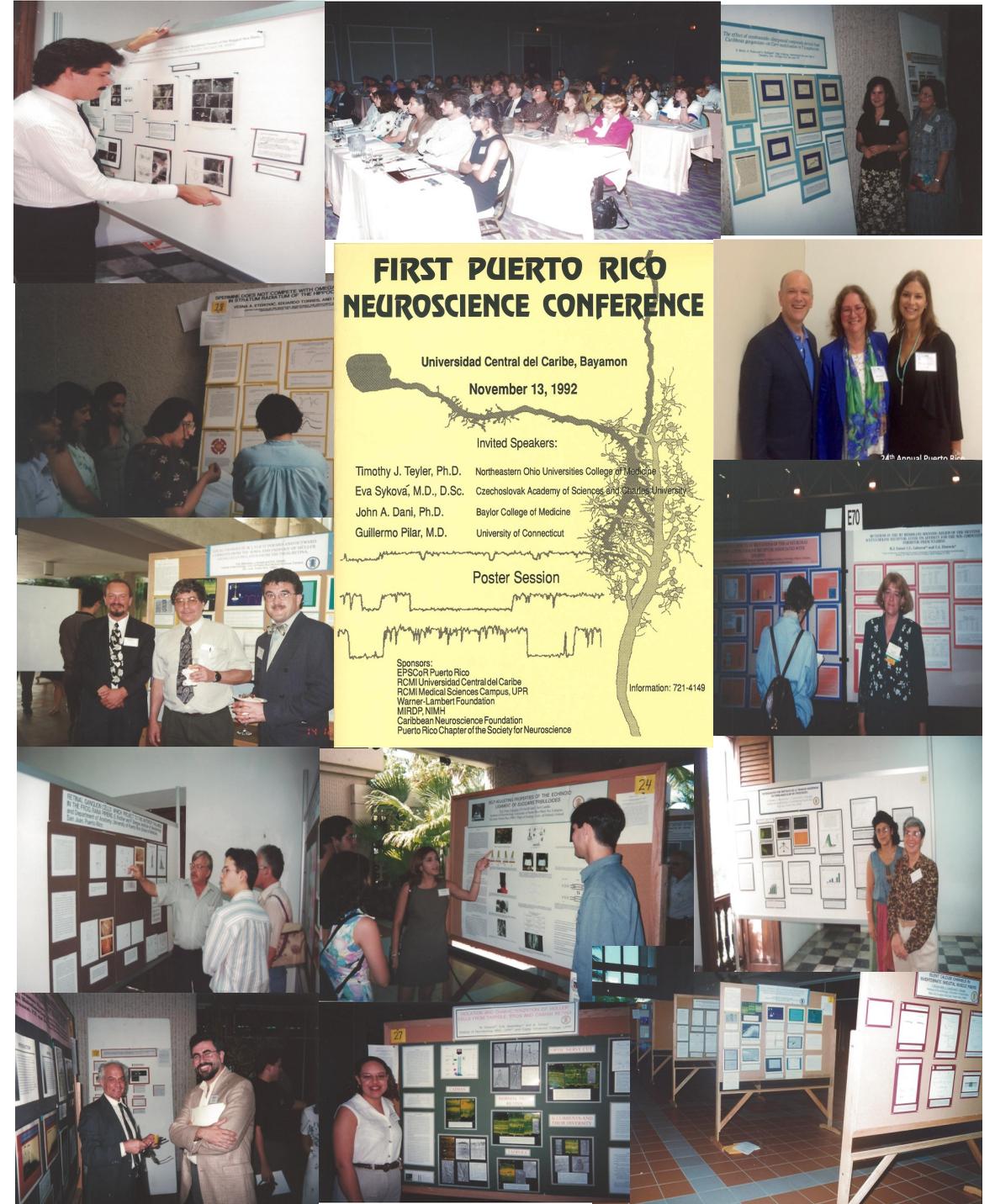
Dr. Eterovic is truly a champion of Neuroscience research in our island and beyond. Her seminal work on the cholinergic system has resulted in dozens of publications and the successful mentorship of many students in the field of Neuroscience. Her scientific leadership at UCC has been instrumental in the growth and development of neuroscience research in her institution and across Puerto Rico. Several generations of Puerto Rican neuroscientists owe Dr. Vesna their inspiration and motivation to pursue a career in science. She is one of the founding members of our Puerto Rico Neuroscience Conference, an unconditional and exceptional supporter of this event.

Muchas Gracias Vesna!



Dr. Pedro Ferchmin
Professor
Department of Biochemistry
Universidad Central del Caribe

Dr. Ferchmin was born in Polonia and arrived in Argentina in 1948. During his PhD studies, he worked with Argentinean Nobel Laureate Bernardo Alberto Houssay who in 1947 received one-half Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine for his discovery of the role played by pituitary hormones in regulating the amount of glucose in animals. In addition, he worked with Houssay's mentor Luis Federico Leloir, an Argentine physician, and biochemist who in 1970 received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for the synthesis of glycogen. Therefore, for this reason, Ferchmin has dedicated approximately 40 years of his life to studying carbohydrates. From this prominent Argentinian scientific environment, he went to the University of California Berkeley, for a postdoctoral training mentored by Melvin Calvin, who was an American biochemist most famed for discovering the Calvin cycle, for which he was awarded the 1961 Nobel Prize in Chemistry. While in Berkeley, Ferchmin continued the interphase between human behavior and biochemistry. In 1975, once he finished his postdoc, he moved back to Argentina and was in charge of Biochemistry in the department of Agronomy at the National University of Cordoba. This was during difficult political times in Argentina, due to the civic-military dictatorship of Argentina (1976-1983). Therefore, this motivated him to look for new job opportunities in an alternative place. That is how he ended in Universidad Central del Caribe in 1976, where together with Vesna Eterovic they build up their research program from scratch with limited resources and limited support. They were young and full of enthusiasm and did marvelous work given the lack of resources. Later on, thanks to grants from NIH's MBRS (Minority Biomedical Research Support) obtained in collaboration with la Universidad Interamericana they were able to fully equipped and build their lab. Through MBRS funds Dr. Vesna Eterovic created the Molecular and Behavioral Center and later on they acquired SNRP (Specialized Neuroscience Research Program). *The idea of creating the PR Neuroscience Conference occurred right after a seminar that Dr. Orkand offered in UCC. All, Dr. Orkand, Dr. Ferchmin, Dr. Eterovic, and Dr. Hann sat down together in the Burger King across UCC and developed the idea. Using Dr. Ferchmin's words: "The idea has no owner, it was an initiative of four."*



CSMV: People have been visiting and sharing the event. At the moment, 350 people want to attend the 2016th meeting.

VE: Where are you going to hold so many people?

CSMV: The Amphitheater holds 500 people. The message is that Neuroscience in PR continues to grow and we will have a lot of students and a lot of professors, which is something that fills me with pride and satisfaction, but it should even fill you up more with this satisfaction, because if it were not for that initiative, we would not have this enthusiasm.

VE: Really it was an enormous satisfaction for me to see it grow for 25 years and we have not lost any single year and in the beginning it started just as a collaboration of 2 institutions: UCC and The Institute of Neuroscience, whose director at the moment was Richard Orkand, Jose Del Castillo was not there anymore. Then Ponce School of Medicine joined, and then Río Piedras and those 4 firmly supported the event. We did not have a specific establishment or a continuous directive and it continued to get a life of its own, which is incredible.

VE: What I would like to do is to stop making it a big secret. We need to promote these meetings throughout the island. This is a really well-kept secret among the Neuroscientists in PR. Now, we have to go to NIH, to SFN.

VE: Vesna Eterovic

CSMV: Carmen S. Maldonado-Vlaar

Dr. Richard Hann
Professor and Chair,
Department of Biochemistry
Universidad Central del Caribe



Dr. Richard Hann was born in Kansas City, Missouri but grew up in Oklahoma. He received his undergraduate degree in chemistry from the University of Colorado in Boulder and his medical degree from the University of Oklahoma in Oklahoma City. He is married to Betty and has three grown sons. Dr. Hann has dedicated almost his entire professional career to Puerto Rico. He joined the faculty of the Department of Biology at the University of Puerto Rico Río Piedras campus in 1974. Then in 1976 he joined the Department of Biochemistry at the new Universidad Central del Caribe medical school in Cayey. He has stayed at that institution through its relocation to Bayamon in 1990 up to the present time, moving up from Assistant Professor to Professor and Chairman of the Department of Biochemistry. Dr. Hann has always divided his time between research and the teaching of biochemistry to medical students and graduate students. He especially likes to use clinical cases to make biochemistry interesting and meaningful to the first-year medical students.

Dr. Hann's research has focused on the structure and function of nicotinic acetylcholine receptors. He has enjoyed long-term collaborations with Dr. Vesna Eterovic and Dr. Pedro Ferchmin. Among the discoveries made in Dr. Hann's lab are:

- 1) that certain peptide toxins from cone snail venom, the alpha-conotoxins, can distinguish between the different agonist binding sites on acetylcholine receptors.
- 2) that gangliosides are present in substantial amounts in acetylcholine receptor-rich membranes prepared from electric organ and that ganglioside GM2 is the major ganglioside in these membranes
- 3) that diterpenoid cembranoids from Caribbean soft corals and from tobacco plants act as noncompetitive inhibitors of the nicotinic acetylcholine receptor.



Dr. Richard K. Orkand
Professor and Director
Institute of Neurobiology (1986-1996)

Richard K. Orkand born New York, April 23, 1936. B.S. in Pharmacy, Columbia University (1956). Ph.D. in Pharmacology, University of Utah, Salt Lake City (1961). Post-doctoral research in the laboratory of Prof. Bernard Katz at University College in London, on the electric properties of heart cells (1961-64). Moved to the laboratory of Stephen Kuffler at Harvard, where he made a landmark study of the glial contribution to potassium buffering (1964-66). Assistant Professor of Physiology, University of Utah (1966-68). Associate Professor of Zoology, UCLA Research (1968-71). Professor of Biology, member of Brain Research Institute, UCLA (1971-74). Honorary M.A. from the University of Pennsylvania (1974). Professor and Chairman of the Department of Physiology and Pharmacology at the School of Dental Medicine, University of Pennsylvania (1974-86). NRSA Award, Invited Professor, Department of Physiology and Experimental Ophthalmology, University of Geneva, working with Jonathan Coles (1981-82). Alexander von Humboldt Foundation Senior US Scientist Prize, Institute of Neurobiology, University of Heidelberg with Helmut Kettenmann (1982-83). Professor of Physiology, UPR Medical Sciences Campus (1986-2002). Director of the Institute of Neurobiology, UPR (1986-96). Died in Seattle, Washington on January 16, 2002. Dr. Orkand produced 86 papers and reviews on the physiology of neuroglia, neuron-glia interactions, excitation-contraction coupling and nociception. He with his fellow neuroscientists from the UCC founded the Puerto Rico Neuroscience Conference.

Interview with Dr. Eterovic at UCC about Puerto Rico Neuroscience Conference

October 27, 2016

VE: When we were still in UCC at Cayey I met a Puerto Rican woman, very famous, Antonia Coello Novello, she was the first woman and first Hispanic to serve as Surgeon General of the United States. She was, at the time I met her, the vice-director of the National Institutes of Child Health and Infant Development. She came to the inauguration of our School of Medicine, which was at that time, a remodeled tobacco ranch. After the ceremony and the kilometric speeches, we sat down and I started to talk to her about our research at UCC and she decided to invite me to her institute at NIH to participate in an internal study session. So, after the study session, a world opened in front of me, I came back with ideas to make meetings and conferences. So I gathered Richard Hann (UCC), Pedro Ferchmin (UCC) and Richard Orkand (UPR-Neurobiology) about the idea of making a conference. We made a Meeting in the Burger King that is across the street of UCC. We never asked the Burger King for sponsoring, but they could have benefitted from the promotion in the events. So, that day we decided to make the First PR Neuroscience Conference, in the year 1992, and subsequently, it was the year of the first conference. That is how the Conference was founded. That is why I would like to thank you for the honor of commemorating this event, but I would love to include in the commemoration, the contribution of the other 3 other founding members.

CSMV: Of course, they are all included in this honor.

VE: Thank you very much. So it was an incredible thing. I will tell you about some of the things that were done. It was such an enormous enthusiasm for everyone, the school's Presidency, the Deans, everyone felt very happy. The basis of this enthusiasm comes from the arrival of Jose del Castillo and his establishment of the Institute of Neurobiology, where there had been Neuroscience from the 60's so, it was an explosion in that moment.

CSMV: And it is still here, 25 years later...I wanted to comment to you, with all these advances in social media, in Facebook, 30,000 visits and "Likes" to the 25th PR Neuroscience page.

VE: Wow that is amazing!