The inaugural meeting of the Puerto Rico Physiological Society (PRPS) was held on February 4, 2011 at the Univ. of Puerto Rico (UPR), Medical Sciences Campus in San Juan, PR. Under the title, “First Congress on Physiological Sciences,” the PRPS gathered faculty, researchers, and students (postdoctoral, graduate and undergraduate) interested in the physiological sciences. Attendance at the meeting totaled 104 registered individuals and 24 research posters were presented by students from the three major medical schools on the island.

The meeting began at 9:00 AM with a welcome message from Dr. Pedro Santiago-Borrero, acting Dean of the UPR-School of Medicine and introductory remarks by Nelson Escobales, President of the PRPS and Director of the Physiology Department, UPR-School of Medicine. Escobales described the mission and objectives of the recently created PRPS and its major accomplishments that include, among others, a partnership with Pfizer Pharmaceuticals to develop an outreach program for high school students. He also

Elizabeth M. McNally, Keynote Speaker presents “Genetic Mechanisms of Cardiac and Muscle Disease.”

PRPS honors Jesús Santos-Martínez with a Distinguished Service Award. From left to right: Norman Maldonado, Nelson Escobales, Jesús Santos-Martínez, Martin Frank, and Guido E. Santacana.

PRPS members interacting at the poster session.

Nelson Escobales, President of PRPS

Martin Frank presents “Your Science, Your Society: APS Approaching 125 Years.”

Peter Lauf presents “APS Chapters: Grass Roots of the American Physiological Society.”
described the participation of the Department of Physiology in the PhUn Week Program of the APS since 2007. Both programs, he indicated, are essential for the Chapter’s mission because they create awareness about physiology among students and teachers in high schools, stimulating potential future scientists to consider physiology as an important career area. Finally, Escobales thanked this year’s sponsors for their support which includes the American Physiological Society, Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, Oriental Bank, Kent Scientific, Ponce School of Medicine, Univ. Central del Caribe and the UPR-Medical Sciences Campus.

Following Escobales’ remarks, Martin Frank, Executive Director of the APS, addressed the audience on the “APS approaching 125 years.” Frank’s presentation was followed by Peter Lauf who talked about “APS Chapters: Grass roots of the American Physiological Society.” Lauf’s visit to the UPR-Department of Physiology, two years earlier, played a critical role in the development of the PRPS. He also announced a starting contribution of $1,000 to develop the “P.K. Lauf and N.C. Adragna Travel Fellowship Award” to support an outstanding student to attend the Experimental Biology Meeting.

The scientific portion of the meeting began with the research keynote address by Elizabeth McNally, Professor from the Univ. of Chicago who specializes in inherited cardiomyopathies and the cardiomyopathy that accompanies neuromuscular disease. The title of McNally’s presentation was “Genetic Mechanisms of Cardiac and Muscle Disease.” McNally’s presentation was followed by a luncheon and the Poster Session.

During the lunchtime session, the posters and the student presenters were evaluated by three judges on the overall quality of the presentations. The best three poster presentations received a cash award. The selections were as follows:
- First Place: Adriana Huertas from Univ. Central del Caribe. The title of Huertas’ presentation was “Inhibition of Monoamine Uptake in Astrocytes: Role in Cocaine-induced Behavioral Effects.” (Advisor: MY Unyushin).
- Second Place: Iris Salgado from UPR-School of Medicine. The title of Salgado’s presentation was “SorLA in Glia is a Partner of the Membrane Raft Protein Caveolin-1” (Advisor: WI Silva).
- Third Place: Giselle Barreto from UPR-School of Medicine. The title of Miss Barreto’s presentation was: “The Role of PPARα in the Protective Effect of Metformin Against Cardiac...”
Ischemia-Reperfusion in Rats” (Advisor: S Javadov).

In the afternoon, Alan Kopin from Tufts Univ. presented a talk on “Novel Recombinant Probes of GPCR Function: Utility in vitro and in vivo.” He was followed by Alberto Nasjletti from New York Medical College who spoke about “Vasoregulatory Function of the Heme-Heme Oxygenase System as Influenced by Redox Mechanisms.” Following the scientific presentations, the PRPS honored Dr. Jesús Santos-Martínez with a Distinguished Service Award for his outstanding career and contribution to medical education in Puerto Rico. Dr. Santos-Martínez was part of the initial faculty of the Department of Physiology in 1954. He conducted postdoctoral work with Ewald E. Selkurt at Indiana Univ. and was a member of the Porter Physiology Program Committee. He played a critical role in the foundation of other Medical Schools in PR and has trained numerous students throughout the years.

The congress concluded with the Business Meeting. The agenda for the meeting included the financial report by Priscila Sanabria, Secretary-Treasurer and the presentation of Leon Ferder as the incoming 2011-2012 PRPS President. President Escobales thanked the support that he received from the Executive Committee and all individuals that helped to make the meeting a success. Following Ferder’s acceptance as new President of the Chapter for 2011-2012, the new President Elect was voted. The members supported the nomination of Jorge Miranda (UPR-School of Medicine) as new President-Elect of the Chapter. Amelia Rivera from Univ. Central del Caribe was elected Councilor.

2011-2012 Officers:
President: Leon Ferder
President-Elect: Jorge D. Miranda
Past President: Nelson Escobales
Secretary/Treasurer: Priscila Sanabria
Councilor: Caroline B. Appleyard
Councilor: Eugenio Longo
Councilor: Jose O. Garcia
(Pastdoctoral student)
Councilor: Amelia Rivera

The meeting concluded at 5:00 PM.

Nelson Escobales, PRPS