Puerto Rico Physiological Society Meets in Ponce

Caroline B. Appleyard, PRPS

The Puerto Rico Physiological Society (PRPS) celebrated its 4th Annual Scientific Meeting on Saturday February 8, 2014 in Ponce at the Ponce School of Medicine and Health Sciences (PSMHS). This meeting, which was organized by Caroline B. Appleyard (PSMHS), President of PRPS, in collaboration with colleagues from the University of Puerto Rico-Medical Sciences Campus (UPR-MSC) and Universidad Central del Caribe School of Medicine, brought together a diverse group of medical and public health professionals from across the island and the U.S. to explore the topic of “Exercise Physiology: from Molecules to Systems.” A total of 136 participants, mainly composed of undergraduate and graduate students, as well as postdoctoral fellows, faculty, and laboratory technicians, attended the meeting.

The meeting began with a continental breakfast and welcoming remarks from Olga Rodriguez-Arzola, President and Dean of PSMHS. The program included a cadre of speakers from universities and health centers in Puerto Rico and the U.S. covering a diverse range of aspects of exercise physiology.

The sessions, moderated by Caroline Appleyard and other members of the PRPS, commenced with a stimulating and thoughtful presentation from the Executive Director of the American Physiological Society, Martin Frank, on “Publishing in the 21st Century.” This was followed by an exciting talk on the effects of exercise on epigenetics and mechanisms of adaptation from Stephen Roth (University of Maryland). During the latter part of the morning, Walter Frontera (Vanderbilt University) and local speaker Anita Rivera-Brown (UPR-MSC) gave scientific sessions related to the effects of exercise on aging and on the thermoregulatory responses that occur during exercise in response to heat stress, a concern for many athletes in Puerto Rico.

After a brief break for lunch and interactive networking, the sessions continued with a short presentation from local faculty member Farah Ramirez (UPR-MSC) on the consequences of physical activity deficit disorder, followed by our final speaker, Carlos Crespo (Portland State University), who spoke about the implications of health disparities in physical activity on the Latino community.
During an afternoon networking session, 28 posters highlighted clinical and scientific research from the three major medical schools in Puerto Rico. Undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral trainees were evaluated by judges (20 faculty members) on the overall quality of their presentations. The winners earned a monetary award and commemorative plaque. They were:

**First place:** Yaria Arroyo-Torres from the University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus: “Mitochondrial DNA Damage and Mitochondrial Function During Acute Oxidative Stress induced by $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ in *Saccharomyces cerevisae*.”

**Second place:** Sehwan Jang from the University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus: “Ischemia-Reperfusion Injury of the Isolated Heart: Role of C-Jun N-terminal Kinase.”

**Third place:** Carolina J. Garcia-Garcia from the University of Puerto Rico-Mayaguez: “Frequency of IL33 Polymorphisms in Puerto Ricans with Asthma.”

Following the poster session, Caroline Appleyard updated attendees on the society’s activities during the past year, including its various outreach efforts around the island, which have impacted more than 260 students, and the new presence of the PRPS on social media. The officers for the PRPS Executive Committee for 2014-2015 were also announced and are as follows: president: Guido Santacana (UPR-MSC); president-elect: Sabzali Javadov (UPR-MSC); past president: Caroline B. Appleyard (PSMHS); secretary/treasurer: Sylvette Ayala (UPR-MSC); councilors: Jose Santiago (UPR-Carolina), Abigail Ruiz (graduate student, PSMHS), Cariluz Santiago (Pontifical Catholic University of Ponce), and Iris Salgado (postdoctoral fellow, UPR-MSC). The PRPS acknowledged this year’s sponsors for their support, which included the American Physiological Society, Laboratorio de Patologia de Noy, Merck, BioAnalytical Instruments, Coca-Cola, Ponce School of Medicine and Health Sciences (PSMHS), the UPR-Medical Sciences Campus (UPR-MSC), and the RISE training programs at PSMHS and UPR-MSC.

The meeting concluded in the late afternoon with closing remarks from Kenira Thompson, Dean of Research at PSMHS, and the poster session awards ceremony. Evaluations collected from participants were overwhelmingly positive, and we look forward to next year’s meeting.