**NBTS Council Meeting Minutes**

**June 23, 2012**

**Baltimore, MD**

**In attendance:** Gale Richardson, Phil Bushnell, Gregg Stanwood, Kim Grant, Lynn Singer, Sue Makris, Chip Vorhees, Kim Ehman, Tom Burbacher, Frank Scalzo, Jerry Meyer, Sherry Ferguson, Sonya Sobrian, Helen Sable, Ed Levin.

The meeting was called to order by President Gale Richardson.

**President’s Report.** Gale began by highlighting the most significant successes for NBTS and the President over the past year. The introduction of mid-year Council meetings in 2010 has enabled sustained momentum on issues that are brought up in June, so Gale recommends continuing this practice. This year, Gale worked to coordinate with Teratology Society on the meeting program earlier than has been done in the past. This, coupled with helpful TS headquarters staff, enabled NBTS to have increased input this year. Gale emphasized that it is important to keep reminding TS that we are around; this seems to be the most important factor in having our voice heard. Finally, Gale thanked the many members who contributed to our productivity this year: committee members who were willing to serve in appointed positions; newly elected officers and the Nominations Committee who recruited them; the Awards Committee; the Public Affairs Committee, which was particularly active this year; Mary Gilbert, who assembled the Officer and Chair Handbook (which the Secretary will send to committee chairs at the beginning of each term); Ed Levin and Sue Makris, for talking up NBTS meeting at the SOT Specialty Section; Lori Driscoll, outgoing Secretary; and the mini- Social Event Committee of Sonya Sobrian, Gregg Stanwood, and Devon Graham.

Several challenges also faced the Society this year. Filling the meeting program was very difficult. Gale thanked all who contributed to proposing and organizing symposia; without member assistance, it would not have been possible to create a full program. (As an aside, room numbers in the published program are incorrect, so Gale printed up a correct Word version of the program for all.) Another challenge to NBTS is the decrease in donations, particularly from vendors and agencies, and a lack of grant support for meetings. Hotel services are rapidly becoming more expensive, so Gale was particularly mindful of cutting expenses at the meeting this year. On a positive note, the society is saving money by switching to electronic subscriptions to *Neurotoxicology and Teratology* for its members. (Subscriptions are now free for Associate members and an additional $77 for people who want print subscriptions.) Several members also solicited donations from their institutions and organizations, and Sue Makris suggested putting a “sponsorship opportunities” link on our website. Finally, NBTS is experiencing increased difficulty in finding members who are willing to serve for high-effort positions in the organization, such as the office of Secretary (we had only one candidate for this position this year). One possible solution to this is to contract out some of the more menial administrative tasks to a postdoc who would like a little extra pay, or to TS Headquarters. This idea was met with some resistance but will be considered more fully in the future.

New and ongoing initiatives: 1) Gale has developed revised travel reimbursement guidelines for invited speakers that are in line with TS’s guidelines (see President’s Report). 2) The Strategic Planning Committee will be continued at the meeting this year, with the hope of further discussing our society’s mission and name. The meeting will be on Monday morning before sessions begin, and all are welcome. 3) Successful coordination with the International Neurotoxicology Association for a joint meeting in 2015 took place, thanks to Ed Levin, Ginger Moser, Phil Bushnell, and Merle Paule. 4) Chip Vorhees is spearheading a fact-finding mission to learn more about the advantages and disadvantages of closer coordination with TS. 5) Kim Grant advocated for a reduced registration fee for NBTS members to attend the National Children’s Study session on Wednesday afternoon. NBTS was unable to jointly sponsor this session with TS this year, but will investigate the possibility of doing so in future years.

Gale provided a brief preview of future meeting sites: Tucson, AZ in 2013; Bellevue, WA in 2014; Montreal, Canada in 2015 (with INA); and San Antonio, TX in 2016.

Finally, Gale paid tribute to past NBTS President Patricia Rodier, who passed away in 2012. A PowerPoint memorial was set up at the Registration Desk; thank you to Lori Driscoll for coordinating this. A possible TS joint Symposium in Patricia’s honor is being discussed for the 2013 meeting.

The President’s report was approved by Council.

**Secretary’s Report.** The minutes of the 2011 mid-year Council meeting were approved without change. However, at this time Chip raised questions about our new Mission Statement, which was written by the Strategic Planning Committee and voted in by membership at the 2011 meeting. What does it mean and how do we understand it? What does “across the lifespan” mean? Does it mean exposures that can happen in adulthood, or does it mean adulthood effects that result from early exposure? There was significant disagreement over the answer to this question. The issue was tabled for the SPC meeting on Monday morning.

**Treasurer’s Report.** Treasurer Helen Sable provided separate copies of the Treasurer’s report. In terms of overall health, NBTS lost more than $19K at last year’s meeting and experienced a net loss of $28k for 2011 overall. We are looking at a loss of $17K at this meeting. Fortunately, the Society will save approximately $2000 per year with the conversion to electronic journal subscriptions for members. Members will be asked to pay $77 if they want a paper copy. Second, changing how we handle credit card payments has saved us money. Because Epoch Online was not PCI compliant, they had to pay a penalty, which they passed on to us. PayPal charges us transaction fees, but no monthly fees. We’ve only paid $382 in fees to PayPal so far this year. The only disadvantage to switching to PayPal is that we are experiencing technical issues that arise from a not-so-seamless link transition between our Epoch site and PayPal processing, which resulted in difficulties in knowing who had and had not registered for the meeting.

Other news: Helen filed a tax extension until August in order to discuss our finances at the meeting first, then submit numbers. Continued support of corporate donations is VITAL. We need to survey membership about what vendors we use, then solicit those vendors. We had voted to grant Associate members a free electronic subscription to *NTT*, but the Constitution and Bylaws Committee needs to change this in the Constitution and Bylaws. What should we do about membership dues for Associate Members? Council voted to keep them at $20 to encourage increase in membership. The BTS fund stands at $13,000. We might have a couple more years left, given that we are not funding member speakers.

Sonya Sobrian mentioned that we may want to eliminate the SfN Social, because it is purely a social and does not function as a recruitment tool. Good way to cut money. OR…we could search for people at meeting with relevant abstracts and invite them, and hook vendors into going, so that the social does serve a purpose.

There is one typo in the report: for 2012, we have 125 total members, 16 emeritus members, and 12 associate members.

The Treasurer’s report was approved by Council with the one change to membership numbers.

**Finance Committee Report.** Helen Sable and Gale Richardson presented the report in Stacey Germann’s absence. Information about donations was incomplete as of the time of the meeting. To that point, known corporate donations totaled $11,050, and individual donations from 15 members totaled $904.74. These numbers do not include the TBD support funding for the BTS symposium.

Council approved the tentative report, with the understanding that the final totals would be filled in when they are available and Council would be notified.

**Membership Report.** Sherry Ferguson presented the Membership report on behalf of Ginger Moser. Eight individuals applied for membership this year—five for Full membership and three for Associate membership. Council approved the list for a vote by Membership. Currently NBTS has approximately 140 members, including 13 who have not yet paid 2012 dues. This is about the same as last year.

As was the case with last year, the committee made explicit efforts to contact non-payers. . Eleven individuals were identified; of these, three paid their dues, another two said they would but never did, one was retiring, and we received no response from the remaining five. The ones who have not paid have since been removed from the membership rolls. Ginger contacted editorial board members to see if they would be interested in joining the society; this effort resulted in one Full membership application. Council discussed our ongoing problem of losing Associate members. It is usually the case that these members become interested in different fields after they graduate or move on to another position, so there is little that can be done about the losses.

The Membership Report was approved by Council.

**Nominations Committee Report.** The report was presented by Kimberly Grant. This year we faced difficulties with filling the election ballot, particularly for the position of Secretary. Fortunately, Ginger Moser agreed to run for the position unopposed. Voter turnout was 38%, which is lower than last year. Tom Burbacher is our new President-Elect; Ginger Moser the new Secretary; Jane Adams the new member of Council; and Sherry Ferguson, Susan Schantz, Gregg Stanwood, and Lori Driscoll the new members of the Publications Committee. At this time, it was realized that we have too many members on Publications, so this will need to be rectified as more members transition off the committee.

Ongoing challenges facing Nominations and our society include the lack of qualified candidates for many of the offices and committees. Although good talent is rising up through the ranks in our membership base, we will continue to face difficulties with recruiting good candidates. We will likely need to keep drawing from the pool of past Presidents until the “new guard” are able to run.

The Nominations Committee report was approved by Council.

**Awards Committee Report.** Jerry Meyer presented the Awards Committee report. This year there were seven applications for Conference Awards and one for the Richard Butcher New Investigator Award. The committee unanimously recommended awarding the Richard Butcher New Investigator Award to Dr. Tori Schaefer (nominator Chip Vorhees) for her paper entitled “Neonatal Citalopram Treatment Inhibits the 5-HT Depleting Effects of MDMA Exposure in Rats”. Although all applications were deemed meritorious, the Society could only fund four Conference Awards: (1) Ramon Velazquez (nominator Barbara Strupp), (2) Dr. Brian Powers (nominator Barbara Strupp), (3) Jenna Fielding (nominator Helen Sable), and (4) Lindsay Silva (nominator Diana Dow-Edwards).

The Officer and Committee Handbook needs to reflect the fact that the Awards Committee now also judges and awards Presentation awards (predoc and postdoc); Jerry/Phil Bushnell/Jennifer Willford will be judges this year. Jerry proposed, and the Council voted in favor of, awarding free Associate membership for the subsequent year to our Presentation Awards winners.

Finally, Jerry noted that it is unfair that Awards Committee members are unable to nominate people for awards; this could deter people from serving on the committee. Jerry recommended, and the Council voted, to change the Constitution and Bylaws to state that committee members can nominate candidates but then must recuse themselves from deliberation for that award.

Council voted to approve the Awards Committee report.

**Public Affairs Committee Report.** The report was given by Sonya Sobrian. The committee was very active this year, engaging in two teleconferences and vigorous email communication about two issues. First, Gloria Jahnke of the Teratology Society asked Sue Makris if NBTS would support the recommendations of a position paper from the PAC of the TS on iodine deficiency in pregnancy that arose from a 2010 joint symposium. Despite reservations of PAC members about the fact that the supporting document lacked scholarly merit and ignored the animal literature, the committee voted to support the recommendations because they were factual. The letter sent to Gloria read “…The position paper has been reviewed by Public Affairs Committee of the Neurobehavioral Teratology Society. We support the recommendations made in the paper and ask that our endorsement be indicated by the following statement: *The Public Affairs Committee of the Neurobehavioral Teratology Society supports the recommendations of this paper, that all pregnant and lactating women should ingest a total of 250 micrograms of iodine daily and take daily supplementation of 150 micrograms to achieve this goal."*

Second, Diana Dow-Edwards suggested that the PAC become involved in producing materials regarding the possible consequences of fetal exposure to marijuana. To this end, the PAC members and Diana undertook the writing of a review article about the consequences to the offspring of use of marijuana during pregnancy. The goal of this paper is to influence public policy by providing a definitive evaluation of the risk of use of medical marijuana during pregnancy. Through a teleconference and e-mails, the committee produced an outline for the article, and PAC members volunteered to write various sections of the paper. Council recommended that the PAC solicit contributions from our membership and discuss the possibility of some TS members also contributing through specific word-of-mouth requests.

Council approved the PAC report.

**Editor’s Report.** Phil Bushnell described some of *Neurotoxicology and Teratology*’s major accomplishments of the past year. A Special Issue entitled *Zebrafish: Current discoveries and emerging technologies for neurobehavioral toxicology and teratology*, co-edited by Ed Levin and Robert Tanguay, was published. A database of subject-matter classifications was established in order to better match manuscript submissions with potential reviewers, and Editorial Advisory Board members were asked to classify their areas of expertise. The new NBTS Constitution and By-Laws were published. The flow and quality of manuscripts was maintained in comparison to previous years, although the journal is seeing more submissions in epidemiology and mechanistic work than in whole-animal work. Finally, the Editor was faced with two instances of plagiarized material, and also dealt with a “Clare Francis”, who accused the journal of publishing “unwarranted duplicate/highly overlapping publications”.

A Special Issue on Autism is in progress: *Environmental Influences and Emerging Mechanisms in the Etiology of Autism*. A possible 2013 issue on age-related susceptibility to chemicals is also being discussed. Phil also encouraged the members of the Publications Committee to submit suggestions for additional Special Issues.

The Editor’s Report was approved by Council.

**Publications Committee Report.** (This report was submitted by Frank Scalzo after the Council Meeting, but it was presented at the Business Meeting.) The Publications Committee met immediately prior to the Council meeting. The first item of discussion was the journal section reorganization; the question was raised as to why submissions appeared lower in some sections than others. Suggestions were made for Special Issues: heroin, environmental enrichment, bath salts. Paul Eubig suggested that a review article on flame retardants be solicited, especially in light of new compounds being used. A suggestion was made to provide some standardization for the format of review articles. Kim Yolton indicated that the ADHD paper from last year’s Joint Symposium is nearly completed. Sonya Sobrian described a project to provide warning labels on medical marijuana products. The committee endorsed the concept and the writing of a manuscript titled “Prenatal Cannabis Exposure: Developmental and Long-term Consequences” as a basis for the warning labels. The committee agreed to work with the NTT editor to assist when needed in providing assistance with article reviews where language issues were numerous.

Frank noted that we now have 12 Publications Committee members as of 2012, when we are supposed to have 10. This will be corrected in future years.

**Website Report.** Sherry Ferguson reported that website visits remain at a frequency similar to those in previous years, with the expected spikes during dues renewal season. The major change to the website this year was the conversion to using PayPal for dues and registrations payments, which presented some technical challenges that were worked out with Epoch Online.

Council voted to approve the Website Report.

**Website Redesign Committee Report.** Sherry Ferguson presented this report. In September 2011, Lori Driscoll solicited bids from website companies to redesign our NBTS website. Bids were received from (amount indicates redesign cost): 720MEDIA Web Design - $3600; Custom Management Group - $8477; Epoch Online (current website company) - $3100; Gecko Designs - $3650. The committee evaluated the bids, and the chair made contact with all companies via emails and phone calls and established a key person in each company who became familiar with our needs. Each committee member received the same spreadsheet of information regarding costs, CMS system, and additional information for each company and each member then individually ranked the companies. The rankings from each of the three members were identical, with Gecko Designs being the first choice for all committee members (Sherry, Devon Graham, and Melissa Bailey).

Sherry noted that the NBTS person handling the website will need to have the time and technical expertise to do content management system stuff. Sherry will talk at the Business Meeting about the need for web-savvy folks who may want to serve on a standing web committee, and will solicit ideas for what people want to have on a new website.

The Web Redesign Committee Report was approved by Council.

**International Neurotoxicology Association Report.** Ed Levin presented the report. NBTS/TS/OTIS will hold a joint meeting with INA in Montreal in 2015, due to the efforts of Merle Paule, Ginger Moser, Ed Levin, and Phil Bushnell. Our proposal won over those of three other competitors. The theme of the meeting will be neural mechanisms of impairment across the lifespan. Contact Ed if you are interested in serving on committee to plan meeting, write R13s, etc.

**AAALAC Representative Report.** Sonya Sobrian presented the AAALAC Representative Report. She has just completed her second term as the Chair of the Board of Trustees [BOT]. The Guide has been implemented; AAALAC site visits based on the Guide began in September of 2011. During the last 12 months, AAALAC has developed answers to frequently asked questions [FAQs], posted revised position statements on the AAALAC website, held a series of webinars regarding implementation of the 2011 Guide and in general has increased educational efforts in this area. The Council on Accreditation has given accredited units 12 months to implement some changes mandated by the new Guide; Council members’ evaluations for animals facilities continue to be based on performance standards and professional standards rather than engineering standards. The enrichment section of the Guide is the most problematic, as it requires increased enrichment based on minimal data. NBTS could take leadership in studying this or creating meta-analyses of existing data. Chip has worked out an enrichment paradigm in his facility that is successful if anyone is interested in learning more.

Because of the growth both in accredited units and members of the BOT, a Strategic Planning Committee will begin work in January of 2013 to consider new directions and strategies for the organization.

The AAALAC Representative Report was approved by Council.

**National Children’s Study Liaison Report.** Kim Grant reported that, given the controversy surrounding the NCS of late, it is not a happy time for the study. However, a half-day session devoted entirely to the National Children’s Study is embedded in this year’s Teratology Program. As the NBTS liaison, Kim was able to help secure opportunities for neurobehavioral work to be presented. This session is open to NBTS members at a cost of $50 per person. Given the importance of this data presentation, NIH has decided to WebEx the session live to key government agencies around the nation.

**Associate Member Representative Report.** Lori Driscoll presented the report for Abby Meyer, who could not be present. Abby spent a significant amount of time contacting potential meeting attendees in the Baltimore area, with the help of Devon Graham, Chip Vorhees, and other NBTS members. She also assisted the Secretary in recruiting Associate Members and Nonmember registrants to work the registration desk. For future Associate Member Representatives, Abby recommends compiling a list of contacts immediately so as to be able to send a ‘save-the-date’ email followed by a reminder email a few months later and finally a registration announcement at the time registration opens.

**Other Business/Issues**

**NBTS/TS fact finding mission.** Chip Vorhees proposed that NBTS investigates the possibility of associating itself more closely with TS. Teratology was once much bigger than it is now; it is down to 466 members. They are considering incorporating MARTA to be a section of TS. NBTS should not become a section, but if we could share headquarters staff, have a bigger say in long-term site selection and meal negotiations, then it may be worthwhile for us. Joint registration has always been too expensive. Chip wants to explore TS’s financial structure and costs for meetings; then make a financial proposal to bring to the societies to discuss. This fact-finding mission is based on premise that we want to stay with TS. If we wish to expand to include research on adult-onset exposures, then it would not make sense. This issue will be discussed at the Strategic Planning Committee meeting on Monday morning.

**Officer’s Handbook.** Lori Driscoll and Gale Richardson relayed that the long-awaited handbook, to which many former and current officers and committee chairs contributed, was finally compiled by Mary Gilbert. Gale edited the document for clarity and content, Lori Driscoll then proofread, and a draft was sent to several members for final suggestions and edits. The Handbook will be distributed by the Secretary every year to new officers and committee chairs, and it will be made available on the new website.