

Reflections on the 69th Annual Meeting of the Society for Research into Hydrocephalus and Spina Bifida

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Occasionally, I like to quip that "I'm a scientist, so I never lie", but believe me when I say that the most recent Annual Meeting of the SRHSB was one of the very best I've seen in my 40 years' of attendance. As always, the ambiance was welcoming, informal (although our President, Mr. Ian Pople, maintained decorum with a necktie throughout), refreshingly open, and professionally held at very high standards. There were many uplifting moments, but several stood out in my mind.

We certainly benefitted from the collaboration with the Hydrocephalus Association (HA), bringing many new faces to the conference, aided by the HA workshop on "Engineering in Hydrocephalus" that preceded the SRHSB meeting. Monica Chou, PhD, Director of Research for HA, was instrumental in organizing both the HA and SRHSB meetings. With the help of Dianne Kean, the mother of a 40-year-old son with hydrocephalus who has endured more than 150 surgical procedures, and Jamie Wright, MD, PhD, a resident in Neurology who has encountered numerous setbacks in her clinical training, Monica et al. brought a new awareness of the struggles and emotional strain hydrocephalus. I hope we can build on this wonderful relationship with HA in the future.

Another inspiring feature of this meeting was the truly outstanding quality of all the presentations. As an older (shall we say "experienced" neuroscientist?), I was so impressed by insights and experimental results delivered by many younger students and investigators. The cellular, molecular, and genetic approaches demonstrated by these colleagues made me wish I could go back to graduate school, but the mechanisms were so well-explained and so significant for novel treatments that my confidence in more effective treatments was raised to new levels. These approaches were balanced so well by clinical presentations, as exemplified by Dr. Benny Iskandar's incredible description of his new program "Preclinical Advancements in Spina Bifida Treatment Using Research in Experimental Sheep" (P.A.S.T.U.R.E.S.) at the University of Wisconsin. True to the SRHSB mission, we achieved a wonderful balance between research in hydrocephalus and spina bifida, and the perfect closing of the conference was provided by the "Vision 2030 Fireside Chat: The Future of Hydrocephalus and Spina Bifida Care".

Albert Isaacs, Jo Glazier, Ian Pople, Monica Chou, and so many others are to be congratulated on an outstanding conference, and for setting the bar high for the 2026 SRHSB Annual Meeting in Amsterdam. Can't wait!