Review of the First Annual NS Meeting
Turhan Canli, NS Events Chair

After about a year of preparations by the program committee, we commenced the first annual meeting of the Neuroethics Society November 13-14, 2008, in the headquarters of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in Washington, D.C. During the initial planning stages, we had hoped for a gathering of a hundred or so. Instead, we had a turnout of well over 200 registrants. In addition to this delightfully strong showing, it was particularly exciting to see the geographic diversity of our membership: our meeting drew members from more than a dozen countries. Clearly and truly, the Neuroethics Society is an organization with international reach. Boding well for the future of the Society, many attendees were students, and some of them made it to the meeting thanks to the generosity of the Greenwall Foundation, which made available student travel scholarships.

The day started early (7:30 AM) with registration, a breakfast buffet, and poster set-up. Close to 30 attendees submitted poster abstracts, highlighting the level of participation of the Society’s membership. Following opening remarks by our Society’s President, Steven Hyman, and our host, AAAS President Alan Leshner, the conference began. What followed was a 2-day whirlwind of presentations on the neuroethics of pediatric bipolar disorder, decision-making and free will, lie detection, national intelligence, the business of neuroscience, public policy, and a debate on cognitive enhancement. If you were there, you can re-live these moments, and if you were not there, you can get a feel for the discussions that took place, by visiting the Dana Foundation’s news blog (address at the bottom).

A business lunch meeting on the second day drew the largest turnout I have ever seen at a conference of this size. The meeting covered the organizational structure of the society, international membership, and future conference venues. Chicago, the site of next year’s Society for Neuroscience meeting, emerged as a favorite for next year’s Neuroethics Society meeting. Stay tuned for an email poll on this very question.

With so much food for thought (and food, and lots of coffee) there was ample time for unstructured discussion and socializing. The first day featured a reception and poster session, the second day closed with updates, FYIs, and news from the cutting edge by the attendees themselves, which gave everyone an opportunity to hear the latest on funding opportunities, upcoming events and workshops, and recent developments across the world of neuroethics.

It was an extraordinary meeting, thanks to the caliber of speakers and the enthusiasm of the audience, who stayed engaged throughout the two-day event. This meeting would not have been possible without the support of the Dana Foundation, AAAS, and the Greenwall Foundation, nor without the hard work of the program committee (Martha Farah, Mark S. Frankel, Elizabeth Phelps, Eric Racine, Ilina Singh, and Paul Wolpe). The bar has been set high for our second meeting. But no worries – we’re already working on it.

2008 NS Meeting Round-Up now online

- Read the Dana Foundation blog
- Podcast interviews with meeting speakers including:
  Hank Greely
  Martha Farah
  Turhan Canli
  Judy Illes
  Steven Hyman
- Pictures from the meeting (courtesy of AAAS)

See this and more at www.neuroethicssociety.org
Meeting Round-up
From the Editors: Have you attended an interesting neuroethics meeting recently? Please send us a short report to publish in the newsletter. Submissions may be edited for length. Send reports to info@neuroethicssociety.org.

Global Minds, Aarhus, Denmark, 28-29 November, 2008
Jenny Gristock, NS Member

Organised by Nils Bubandt and Andreas Roepstorff, of Aarhus University. The meeting included keynote lectures by Nikolas Rose of the London School of Economics BIOS Centre, and Darren Schreiber of the University of California San Diego. Bradley Lewis of New York University also spoke about ‘narrative psychiatry’, which he argued was ‘essential for understanding neurological phenomena’ because ‘it is stories that allow patients to select, order and shape the facts that matter’ and because listening ‘instantly changes the experience of the situation’.

www.aal.au.dk/globalminds/presentation

Interdisciplinary Neuroschool, Rome, Italy, 29 September – October 4, 2008
Jenny Gristock, NS Member

This workshop, organised by the European Neuroscience and Society Network and held at the European Molecular Biology Laboratory in Rome, brought together early career researchers from all over Europe to learn about, and discuss behavioural genetics. Presentations included Klaus-Peter Lesch, of the University of Wuerzburg, who discussed his influential work on polymorphism in the serotonin transporter gene, and gene-environment interactions and, of the participants, Daniel Margulies’s research on resting-state functional MRI. Social scientist participants had their first experiences of practical bench work, and the group as a whole developed some early ideas about methods and approaches that could be used to integrate ‘society’ and ‘context’ into lab experimentation.

First International Functional Neurology Society Conference, Pavia, Italy, 22 October, 2008.
Emiliano Feresin, Guest Contributor

This conference brought together speakers from Italy, the UK and the US On the topic of neurophilosophy and brain imaging. The Society delivered the 19th Ottorino Rossi Award to Patricia Smith Churchland of the University of California, Dan Diego. Churchland gave the honorary lecture “Neurophilosophy and consciousness.”

Neuroethics Event Calendar
Members are encouraged to submit event listings for consideration to info@neuroethicssociety.org


June 22-July 3: 22nd annual Summer in Cognitive Neuroscience, UC Santa Barbara. The focus of this year’s institute will be Human Uniqueness and Individuality. Applications are invited from beginning and established researchers in cognitive neuroscience. Applications must be received by February 6, 2009. http://www.sagecenter.ucsb.edu/si/

August 2-12: Neuroscience Boot Camp, Philadelphia, PA. The Penn Neuroscience Boot Camp is designed to give participants a basic foundation in cognitive and affective neuroscience and to equip them to be informed consumers of neuroscience research. Through a combination of lectures, break-out groups, panel discussions and laboratory visits, participants will gain an understanding of the methods of neuroscience and key findings on the cognitive and social-emotional functions of the brain, lifespan development and disorders of brain function. Graduate and professional students, working professionals and college and university faculty are encouraged to apply. The application submission deadline is February 1, 2009. http://www.neuroethics.upenn.edu/boot_camp.html.


September 24-26: Brain Matters : New Directions in Neuroethics Conference, Nova Scotia, Canada. Speakers include David Healy (Wales), Walter Glannon (CA), James Bernat (US) and Barbara Sahakian (UK). The deadline for abstract submission is March 1, 2009. For more information, please see http://www.noveltechethics.ca/site_events.php?page=372.
Dr. Tovino’s research interests lie in the areas of confidentiality and privacy; health care ethics, including neuroethics and research ethics; and the history of medicine, including the history of midwifery and mental health care. Dr. Tovino most recently served as Visiting Professor at the University of Houston Law Center’s Health Law & Policy Institute, where she taught Health Law, Health Privacy, and Torts.

Tovino recently earned her Ph.D. in medical humanities with distinction from the University of Texas Medical Branch, Institute for the Medical Humanities, where she specialized in health care ethics, the history of medicine, and literature and narrative studies in health care. . . . Her doctoral dissertation, a contribution to the burgeoning field of neuroethics, examined the confidentiality and privacy implications of advances in functional magnetic resonance imaging.

You have an interesting combination of degrees; tell me about that.

Stacey Tovino: My bachelor’s degree was in Economics, and I became interested in law after writing my undergraduate Honors Thesis at Tulane on the "Law and Economics of Intellectual Property Rights." University of Houston had a great Intellectual Property program, so that is why I chose Houston for law school, but once I got there I realized that I liked the coursework better in Houston’s top-ranked Health Law and Policy Institute. I took ten health law courses during law school and my career in health law was born.

For the six years following law school, I practiced health law. I represented physicians, scientists, hospitals, academic medical centers, organ procurement organizations, AIDS clinics, rehabilitation facilities, and related health care organizations.

I understand circumstances in your law firm suggested it might be time to broaden your career. What did you do then?

I went back to school to get my PhD in Medical Humanities at the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB). At UTMB, my advisor and mentor was William (Bill) Winslade, PhD (Philosophy), JD, and PhD (Psychoanalysis), and during my first year there he offered an awesome class entitled, “Psychoanalysis, Consciousness, and Neuroethics.” During that class, I fell in love with the issues that we now refer to as neuroethics. My dissertation reportedly was the first completed dissertation in the field of neuroethics. The title was: "The Visible Brain: Confidentiality and Privacy Implications of Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging." I was lucky enough to have Dr. Judy Illes (then at Stanford, now at UBC) on my dissertation committee. With Bill’s encouragement and Judy’s passion for neuroethics, I was inspired to continue in the field. Since graduate school, I’ve been primarily writing in the field of neuroethics and my current position is Associate Professor of Law at Drake University Law School in Des Moines, Iowa.

Question: Excellent! What do you teach?

I get to teach a number of wonderful classes here at Drake Law School. In addition to a variety of traditional health law classes, such as Introduction to Health Law, Elder Law, HIPAA Privacy, Patients’ Rights, and Complementary and Alternative Medicine and the Law, I teach Mental Health Law as well as Bioethics and the Law. In these two classes, I examine a number of neuroethics issues, including the confidentiality and privacy implications of advances in functional neuroimaging, consent to neuroimaging research, and incidental findings.

Question: And what’s your research like?

Right now I’m working on two law review articles. In the first article, I’m exploring how stakeholders are relying on advances in the neuroscience of female-specific and female-prevalent conditions (e.g., postpartum depression, postpartum psychosis, premenstrual dysphoria, and eating disorders) to lobby for increased health insurance coverage, health insurance parity, and legislative appropriations for research funding. Advances in the neuroscientific understanding of these conditions have important policy implications. In the second article, I’m examining how civil and regulatory health, disability, and benefit structures may be impacted by neuroscientific claims relating to psychiatric diagnosis via neuroimaging.

Question: I understand you’re also working on two books.

One of the books will be a textbook relating to Complementary and Alternative Medicine and the Law. My co-author (Lucinda Jesson, Hamline University School of Law) and I hope that it will be used not only in health law classrooms but also to introduce bioethics students, medical humanities students, health sciences students, and philosophy students to the unique ethical, legal, and social issues that are raised by the provision of health care by individuals other than traditional allopathic physicians.

The second co-authored book is actually within the fields of neuroethics and neurolaw and will examine ethical, legal, and social issues raised by advances in neuroscience in terms of the chronological development (birth, life, and death -- and everything in between) of the human brain. My coauthor (William J. Winslade, University of Texas Medical Branch Institute for Medical Humanities) and I are interested in devoting a chapter each to different stages of the development of the human brain and showing how advances in neuroscience likely will require patients, clinicians, legislators, and other stakeholders to re-think traditional ethical and legal issues set in the health care context. I just finished researching the first chapter relating to neuroscientific advances in fetal and neonatal neuroscience, including the use of structural and functional neuroimaging on fetuses and neonates. Questions we are examining include: How might fetal neuroimages showing more definitive macrostructural and microstructural anomalies -- or functional fetal neuroimages showing no or suspicious brain activity in response to light or sound or other stimuli (see, e.g., Fulford et al., "Fetal Brain Activity in Response to a Visual Stimulus," Human Brain Mapping, 2003; and Fulford et al., "Fetal Brain Activity and Hemodynamic Response to a Vibroacoustic Stimulus," Human Brain Mapping, 2004) -- be used in the future by clinicians to assess compromised pregnancies or by families to make pregnancy management decisions? How might neuroimages be used in decisions to withdraw or withhold life-sustaining treatment from pre-term neonates when a clinician relies on the neuroimage to predict that the neonate has an unfavorable neurodevelopmental outcome? What should be the role of MRI data in treatment decisions such as these? (Continued on page 4)
Already we have done a good job of “mapping the field” so to speak. With respect to neurolaw, which is my focus, I think we have identified what will be the major issues in terms of the impact neuroscience will or may have for criminal responsibility, criminal procedure, criminal sentencing, capital punishment, civil and criminal evidence law, constitutional law, tort law, employment law, disability law, the law of human subjects research, and health law. Of course, I do anticipate that litigants and other stakeholders will attempt to use neuroscience in ways that we have not anticipated. The challenge here will be for our courts, juries, and legislators, most of whom do not have clinical or scientific backgrounds, to respond in an appropriate manner. What “appropriate” means in this context, though, is still subject to debate. How do we educate these stakeholders regarding the complexity of neuroscience? The difference between direct measurements of brain activity and the use of BOLD signal as a proxy for neural activity, for example? The different ways in which functional neuroimages can be interpreted? The limitations of existing peer-reviewed scientific studies?

The biggest challenge that I face, personally, is walking the fine line between anticipating future ethical, legal, and social issues and examining these issues in publications and presentations, on the one hand, and responding to critics who say that by addressing these issues in a proactive manner we are giving undue weight to preliminary scientific studies and misleading the public regarding the current state of the science. In the past, bioethicists and health law scholars were criticized for failing to adequately think through the issues raised by advances in medicine and science, including advances in the second half of the twentieth century relating to organ and tissue donation and transplantation and advances in emergency and life-sustaining treatment.

Those are excellent questions, and I’m sure exactly the sort neuroethics as a discipline should be addressing. What else are you doing?

My other focus right now is Drake Law School’s new Health Law and Policy Center, launched this fall. Drake University Law School had wanted to establish a Health Law and Policy Center to promote an interdisciplinary understanding of local, national, and international issues in health law and policy, which is exactly what I’m interested in, and when they posted the advertisement last fall I jumped at the opportunity to serve as the Center’s Director. It is so exciting for me to play a role in the development of a new Center like this. I’ve been here about seven weeks and in that time we have developed a new health law curriculum, proposed a new Health Law Certificate program, collaborated with several other local health-related schools and departments on guest lectures, student exchanges, and research projects; worked with students to develop seminar papers and journal articles on health law-related topics; presented a number of neuroethics papers across the country; assisted in the coordination of several dual-degree programs (including our JD/PharmD, our JD/MPH, our JD/MHA, our JD/MSW, our JD/MBA, and our JD/MPA) . . . and we’re even building a new Web site (http://www.law.drake.edu/centers/healthLaw/) that we hope will be a resource to current and future students interested in health law as well as the local health care community. The time has flown by and I can’t wait to watch the Health Law and Policy Center develop further.

Question: You’ve been in this field for a while now. What do you see as the major challenges for neuroethics as a field of study and also in terms of applications over the next, say, 10 years?

Medicine and science were advancing but we – the lawyers and ethicists – were trailing behind. Now, we are trying to identify and examine the ethical, legal, and social issues raised by advances in neuroscience in a forward-thinking and proactive manner, and the criticism we are getting is that, by doing so, we are getting ahead of the medicine and science. It is a difficult line to walk. In my publications and presentations, I always try to emphasize the need to carefully think through issues that advances in neuroscience may bring while also emphasizing that we simply do not know what exactly neuroscience will achieve in the next 5, 10, or 50 years. We must continually revisit our ethical, legal, and social analyses as neuroscience develops. And I think it is here that the Neuroethics Society, including its members who have specialized training in neuroscience, neuroradiology, and other relevant fields, can play an important role by educating, guiding, and collaborating with those of us who have other areas of expertise.

Barbara received her B.S. in Biopsychology from the University of California at Santa Barbara in 2003. She is currently a Doctoral Candidate in the Neuroscience and Behavior program in the Department of Psychology at UCSB and expects to complete her degree in June. Barbara’s research has focused primarily on developing and testing an animal model of female sexual motivation. Her interest in neuroethics stems from a long-standing interest in philosophy and in particular morals and ethics.
International Neuroethics Network (INN) Update
Sofia Lombera, Manager

Neuroethics at the 2008 Society for Neuroscience (SfN) annual conference

In addition to the wide range of content presented at the first annual Neuroethics Society conference this past November in Washington, DC, the SfN annual conference also showcased a number of important neuroethics-related events 156 abstracts presented as part of “Theme H: History, Teaching, Public Awareness and Societal Impacts in Neuroscience”. Twelve (8%) of these were part of the new subtheme, “Ethical and Policy Issues in Neuroscience”.

The 2008 David Kopf Lecture on Neuroethics was given by Dr. Patricia Churchland from the University of California – San Diego. Her lecture, “How Do Brains Navigate their Social/Moral Worlds?” focused on how human moral decision-making is influenced by social behavior. Different kinds of “ecological environments”, environmental, social, behavioral, and cultural settings, result in different approaches to solving problems, moral ones included. Although basic neuroscience mechanisms underlie decision making, particular decisions are context-dependent. She hypothesizes that, as social animals, humans are highly attuned to in-group similarities and out-group differences that influence ideas of attachment and trust and that both are the anchors of morality. Further exploration of this topic can be found in Dr. Churchland’s recent article in Neuron, “The Impact of Neuroscience on Philosophy”.

2009 Social Issues Roundtable at the SfN annual conference

The SfN programming committee is now accepting proposals for symposia, minisymposia and social issues roundtable topics for the 2009 meeting in Chicago (October 17-21, 2009). The deadline for proposals is January 14, 2009 at 5 pm EST. More details on applications can be found on the SfN website (www.sfn.org). The 2008 social issues roundtable focused on “Global Neuroscience – Neuroethics and the Burden of Nervous Systems Disorders” and was hosted by Gregory Quirk, Oye Gureje, Raj Kalaria, Desire

European Matters
Jenny Gristock, NS Student Member Neurosociety Media Centre, SISSA Trieste Italy.

When compared with mainstream Neuroethics activity in North America, European research is of a number of very different flavours, tackling issues connected with neuroscience and society using a plurality of approaches. Leading the way is the London School of Economics European Neuroscience and Society Network, funded by the European Science Foundation, a multidisciplinary forum for timely engagement with the social, political and economic implications of developments in the neurosciences (contact: Caitlin Connors c.m.connors@lse.ac.uk) which organised the events at Rome and Aarhus reported in this month’s newsletter.

Here at the Neurosociety Media Centre, in SISSA, Trieste, Italy, we are particularly interested in the social and ethical implications associated with communications aspects of neuroscience – from the information systems used to integrate other neuroscience applications into everyday life and work practices, to the marketing strategies used to promote cognitive enhancers and the ways in which MRI data are reported in the media. We are also interested in user innovation and forging new partnerships in ethical neuroscience: for example, after learning about brainwave-activated gaming headsets (through Martha Farah’s lecture in Washington DC) we recently introduced a UK researcher developing communication systems for locked-in patients to the headset’s manufacturers, Emotive Systems, to see if it is possible for the researcher to adapt their devices to help his patients talk to their families.

At the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin, researchers are focusing on ‘the construction of different norms, values, meanings, and identities through neuro discourses and practices’ and the emergence of new institutions, groups and forms of being associated with these. A Berlin workshop on this line of inquiry, entitled Neurocultures, will take place in February (contact: Nicolas Langlitz - nlanglitz@mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de). This column is a first glimpse of the work that is going on in Europe, and creating a worldwide network of reporters to bring news of happenings in other parts of the world. If you would like your unit to feature in this page, or are interested in reporting on activity in Europe or elsewhere, do get in touch with Jenny Gristock at SISSA gristock@sissa.it

Sofia Lombera
Tshala-Katumbay, Chandy John, Richard Guerrant and Francoise Baylis were panelists.

The American Journal of Bioethics – Neuroscience (AJOB-N)

AJOB-N, the official journal of the Neuroethics Society is soliciting target articles, especially from the international community, on any neuroethics-related topic. AJOB-N is devoted to ethical, legal and social challenges intersecting with advances in neuroscience and is published three times a year. Visit www.bioethics.net for more information.

If you have any questions or comments please visit the INN website at www.neuroethics.ubc.ca/INN or contact Sofia Lombera at slombera@neuroethics.ubc.ca.

Jenny Gristock

Editor’s note: Jenny’s column will appear on a semi-regular basis in future issues of the Neuroethics Society newsletter. If you are interested in contributing, please contact Martha Farah, NS Communications Chair, at mfarah@psych.upenn.edu.
NS Member Survey

In early January, you’ll receive an email with a link to a membership survey. This survey is an important tool we are using to guide our strategy and growth. Questions include preferences for annual meetings, requests for ratings of membership benefits, and opportunities for feedback and suggestions. Please take the 10-15 minutes needed to complete the survey. The responses are very important to us, and our goal is a completion rate exceeding 80% of NS members. Please do your part.

Opportunities for Education and Employment

NS members can advertise openings for students, fellows, staff and other positions involving research and education in Neuroethics. For more information, email info@neuroethicsociety.org or view the advertising policy on the NS website.

National Core for Neuroethics,
Division of Neurology, Department of Medicine, The University of British Columbia

Knowledge Translation Training and Education Coordinator

The University of British Columbia, Department of Medicine, Division of Neurology, in partnership with the Canadian Dementia Knowledge Translation Network (CDKTN), is seeking a coordinator to spearhead an emerging program focused on knowledge translation training and education. The chosen candidate will further the CDKTN’s global mission of developing a sustainable infrastructure for dementia-related knowledge translation (KT) and exchange by establishing a collaborative and integrated network of key stakeholders. Specifically, the candidate will be responsible for assessing and developing specific training programs and opportunities for researchers, health practitioners, and teachers in knowledge translation and exchange in dementia research. Additionally, he/she will be integral in establishing funding opportunities and research projects throughout the duration of the program. This is a multi-year position with annual renewal contingent upon funding and satisfactory performance.

QUALIFICATIONS & SKILLS

• Masters degree strongly preferred, with research and/or program delivery experience in knowledge translation and exchange
• Experience and knowledge of Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, web design, the Internet, data mining, and other computer skills.
• Superior organizational skills
• Strong leadership skills and demonstrated ability to take initiative
• Previous experience working with research guidelines and procedures as well as curriculum development within an academic community
• Appreciation for multi-disciplinary approach and an understanding of the societal role of dementia and mental illness
• Excellent communication skills

Neuroethics Project Coordinator

The National Core for Neuroethics, located at University of British Columbia, Department of Medicine, Division of Neurology, is seeking a Neuroethics Project Coordinator to work with the team on a number of projects related to perspectives on neuroimaging research, and research on and treatment of neurodegenerative disease and spinal cord injury. The specific projects involve semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The chosen candidate will build upon past research demonstrating the importance of the voice of stakeholders in human neuroscience research. Specifically, the candidate will be responsible for coordinating interviews and focus groups with researchers, patients, physicians and others, assisting with the collection of data and analyses, and manuscript preparation.

QUALIFICATIONS & SKILLS

• Bachelor’s degree with qualitative research experience
• Experience and knowledge of Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, MaxQDA, the Internet, data mining, and other computer skills.
• Superior organizational skills
• Strong leadership skills and demonstrated ability to take initiative
• Previous experience working with research guidelines and procedures
• Excellent communication skills

For further information on both positions, visit www.neuroethics.ubc.ca
To apply please send a cover letter and resume to slombera@interchange.ubc.ca