

Robynn Rockstad-Rex
Pierre J. Magistretti,
MD, PhD

Correspondence & reprint
requests to Ms. Rockstad-Rex:
robynn@ibro.info

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERNATIONAL BRAIN RESEARCH ORGANIZATION: IBRO'S BEGINNINGS

At the dawn of modern neuroscience—midway through the 20th century—the International Brain Research Organization (IBRO) was already in the ether. It was a time filled with both difficulty and optimism: in the aftermath of the Second World War and during the emerging Cold War, science played a critical role in trying to bridge communities that were separated by political dissent. The seeds of IBRO took root during various scientific meetings occurring in the late 1940s and the 1950s, starting with a meeting of electroencephalographers in London in 1947. Momentum built as neuroscientists in many countries expressed a need for a central organization that would cut across world boundaries and improve communication and collaboration among brain researchers. At the 1958 Moscow Colloquium of EEG and Higher Nervous Activity, there was unanimous support for a resolution proposing the creation of an international organization representing brain research worldwide.

In 1960, the Canadian Parliament discussed a bill to approve the charter that created IBRO, and formally established the organization in 1961, the same year in which construction began on the Berlin Wall. Working out of his office at the Montreal Neurological Institute of McGill University, Canada, IBRO's first Secretary-General Herbert Jasper and other IBRO volunteers focused their early efforts on creating a worldwide registry of neuroscientists. At the same time, they were negotiating resources and facilities that would allow IBRO to continue to grow and develop. UNESCO offered to settle IBRO in Paris, providing an office and budget. To this day, the IBRO Secretariat remains in Paris, although outside of UNESCO, with volunteers implementing much of IBRO's outreach programs throughout the world. In 1976, the *Neuroscience* journal was launched, the proceeds from which continue to fund the majority of IBRO's many programs and activities.

With the passage of time, the international scene changed substantially so that interaction between scientists and the training of students could be carried out on a truly international scale without significant restrictions. The number of neuroscientists all over the world increased substantially, while in some parts of the world specific needs and problems arose based on social and economic situations that warranted new and creative ways of proceeding. In light of these changes, IBRO's leadership adapted its objectives to better serve the new international situation and focus on the training and education of students and scientists in regions with special needs. The overall aim was to give neuroscientists in different parts of the world a direct voice in defining their own needs and priorities in research and science education. One step in this direction has been for IBRO to identify a set of 6 regions on the basis of geographic, social, and economic criteria. Each region formed a Regional Committee, composed of 8 active scientists who define its priorities and receive an annual budget from IBRO that is used for the organization of training and capacity-development activities in their region. The present regions are Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the United States and Canada, and Western Europe.

IBRO'S EDUCATIONAL AND CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

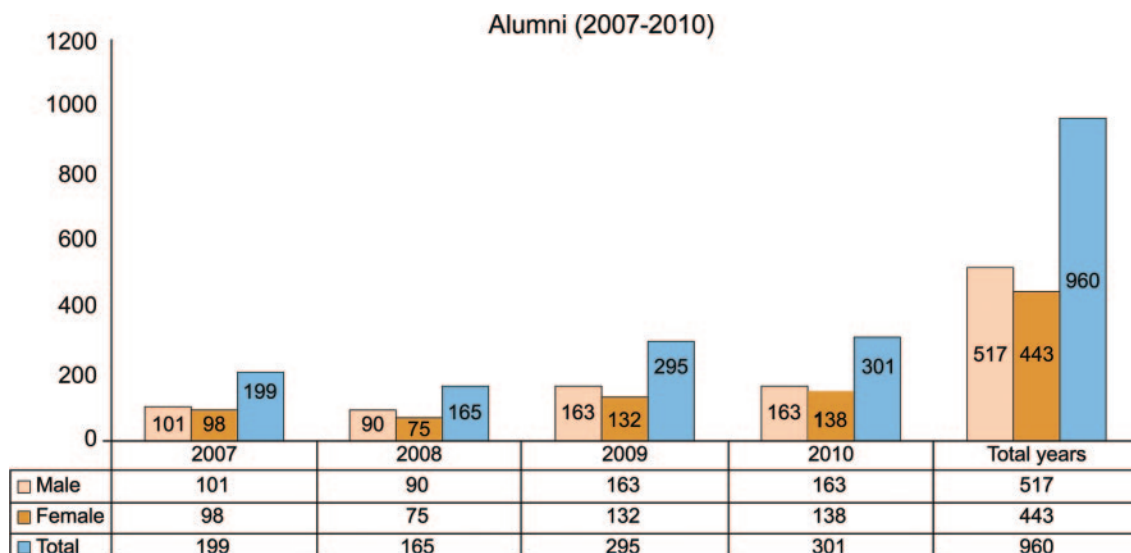
Over the years, IBRO has set up a number of programs to stimulate international contacts in brain research. Some examples of these activities are described below, and are carried out by IBRO's member volunteers within its 6 regions.

IBRO Neuroscience Schools. The main vehicle used by IBRO to interact with young people in all of its regions, IBRO Neuroscience Schools consist of an intensive, structured educational program lasting a week or more, bringing students into contact with distinguished scientists with the capacity, experience, and time to teach students and young faculty. In addition to an aggregate of lectures and laboratory

From the International Brain Research Organization, Paris, France.

Go to Neurology.org for full disclosures. Disclosures deemed relevant by the authors, if any, are provided at the end of this article.

Figure Growth of International Brain Research Organization (IBRO) alumni over 4 years



Since the inception of the IBRO Neuroscience Schools Program in 1999, the number of IBRO alumni today totals more than 5,000 individuals.

techniques, IBRO Neuroscience Schools feature discussions, workshops, roundtables, and consideration of career-development issues such as career tracks, research funding, professional conduct and ethics, the proper use of animals and human subjects in research, and presentation skills. Starting with 3 schools held in 1999, the program's inaugural year, expansion has been rapid and the program has attracted a number of funding partners. In 2011, IBRO volunteers organized 25 schools throughout the world, mainly in Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America. Beyond the educational benefits they provide to students, IBRO schools offer unique opportunities for the mixing of faculty and students from different parts of the world. Not only does this mixing expose young people from developing countries to scientists from leading institutions, but it also sensitizes teachers from the richer countries to the problems faced by their colleagues in the less fortunate parts of the world.

A new, inter-regional initiative has focused on bringing together brilliant students from different regions to encourage future interaction and global collaboration. In 2011, IBRO Inter-Regional Schools were held in the United Arab Emirates (with students coming from throughout the Middle East and Northern Africa), Italy (with students coming from different Mediterranean countries in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa), and South Africa (with students from Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Australia, and Europe).

IBRO Visiting Lecture Team Program. Another successful grassroots, capacity-building effort has been the IBRO Visiting Lecture Team Program (VLTP),

which offers experiment-based lecture courses in economically developing countries, most often in remote areas of the world, that cover a variety of topics of current interest in basic neuroscience. The lecture team consists of 5 members internationally recognized for their excellence as experimentalists and teachers. The intense interaction between lecturers and participants throughout the VLTP, a hallmark of this IBRO program, provides future neuroscientists with mentoring and international contacts that are extremely helpful in pursuing a career in neuroscience. Moreover, the IBRO VLTP has also galvanized the momentum and sourcing of resources necessary to launch basic neuroscience educational programs at local universities where none existed before.

IBRO Alumni Program. The above 2 IBRO educational programs, the Neuroscience Schools and the VLTP courses, are the basis for the mentorship effort that led to the creation of the IBRO Alumni Program, which today numbers nearly 5,000 individuals (figure). The IBRO Alumni Program serves to facilitate interactions between students, as well as students and faculty who have participated in IBRO's educational programs, creating a community of young scientists who benefit from remaining in contact with IBRO, their lecturers, and each other.

IBRO Research Fellowships and Travel Grants. The IBRO Fellowships Program aims to foster neuroscience research, especially in less well-funded countries, by providing support to neuroscientists from diverse geographic and scientific areas who wish to broaden the scope of their training by working

abroad in good laboratories. In the past 2 years, IBRO Fellowships have been awarded to postdoctoral fellows coming from Ethiopia, India, Israel, and Nigeria. The IBRO International Travel Grants Program provides funding to promising young neuroscientists who wish to participate at international neuroscience meetings that they could not normally afford to attend. At these meetings, the travel award recipients have the opportunity to present their research and make important contacts that may prove useful in nurturing a young scientist's career.

The IBRO Return Home Program. To help counteract "brain drain" and promote the growth and quality of neuroscience research in developing countries, IBRO established the Return Home Program in 2006. This Program has already aided 22 young researchers who were trained abroad in returning to their home countries and establishing laboratories there, where they can begin mentoring local talent and further develop high-quality research programs.

The IBRO World Congress of Neuroscience. Held every 4 years, the IBRO World Congress of Neuroscience draws from a global network, from across all neuroscience disciplines and career levels, and supports IBRO's mission of promoting international collaboration and exchange of scientific information

beyond national interests. The IBRO Young Investigators Program, inaugurated in 2011 at the most recent IBRO World Congress in Florence, Italy, provides the means for young researchers from countries with limited resources to spend 1 month at a laboratory within the region where the Congress is held, where they can gain practical experience and expand their professional network before participating at the IBRO Congress. The next IBRO Congress will take place in 2015 in Rio de Janeiro.

50 YEARS OF PROMOTING NEUROSCIENCE GLOBALLY

Founded in 1961 as an organization that would cut across world boundaries and improve communication and collaboration among brain researchers, IBRO has become the global neuroscience federation dedicated to the promotion of neuroscience around the world, with special emphasis on assisting young researchers in the developing world. IBRO now counts 84 member societies in 61 countries, with a total membership of more than 75,000 neuroscientists. Throughout its 50 years, IBRO has continued to pave the way for a more efficient exchange of information, growth of scientific knowledge and, ultimately, a more inclusive world.

DISCLOSURE

The authors report no disclosures relevant to the manuscript. **Go to Neurology.org for full disclosures.**

Neurology[®]

An introduction to the International Brain Research Organization: IBRO's beginnings

Robynn Rockstad-Rex and Pierre J. Magistretti

Neurology 2012;79;1496-1498

DOI 10.1212/WNL.0b013e31826d5fd7

This information is current as of October 1, 2012

Updated Information & Services	including high resolution figures, can be found at: http://n.neurology.org/content/79/14/1496.full
Subspecialty Collections	This article, along with others on similar topics, appears in the following collection(s): Methods of education http://n.neurology.org/cgi/collection/methods_of_education
Permissions & Licensing	Information about reproducing this article in parts (figures, tables) or in its entirety can be found online at: http://www.neurology.org/about/about_the_journal#permissions
Reprints	Information about ordering reprints can be found online: http://n.neurology.org/subscribers/advertise

Neurology® is the official journal of the American Academy of Neurology. Published continuously since 1951, it is now a weekly with 48 issues per year. Copyright © 2012 by AAN Enterprises, Inc.. All rights reserved. Print ISSN: 0028-3878. Online ISSN: 1526-632X.

