The 25th Princeton Conference on Cerebrovascular Disease was held in Portland, Oregon, from May 19th to the 20th, 2006. This was the 50th year of this biannual meeting first held from January 24th to the 26th, 1954, in Princeton, New Jersey. Jim Toole recalled that the location and month of the Conference were selected to be remote enough and the weather inhospitable enough to insure maximum, continuous involvement by the participants in the meeting. The first 11 meetings were held in Princeton. Irving Wright, Professor of Clinical Medicine at Cornell University Medical School, was the Chairman of the first Conference. He had introduced the use of coumadin into medicine and directed the first major trial on oral anticoagulation (in acute myocardial infarction). Wright noted that with “considerable difficulty” he was able to find 38 physicians and scientists with a stroke background for the first meeting; “We could not find more!” Participation in this conference and commitment to research in stroke no longer constitute a “difficulty”. The national commitment to stroke treatment and research was summarized in the opening remarks to this 25th Princeton Conference by Story Landis, Director of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS).

In the tradition of the Princeton Conference both clinical and laboratory aspects of stroke were considered for presentation. The organizing committee decided on separate sessions for clinical and basic science topics. Sessions on clinical topics of Atrial Fibrillation, the potential of Basilar Artery Thrombolysis and Carotid Stenting, and New Approaches to Clinical Trials were organized by Bill Powers and Karen Furie. Stephen Back organized the Neonatal Hypoxia-Ischemia session. The Basic Science sessions devoted to Inflammation, Glutamate Independent Calcium Toxicity, Genomics, Intracerebral Hemorrhage, Adaptive Immunity and Stem Cells were organized by Ray Swanson, Roger Simon, Frank Sharp, Mary Stenzel-Poore and David Greenberg. This year Key Note Lecture was given by Dale Bredesen on Mechanisms of Cell Death. The meeting organization incorporated several new approaches. The Atrial Fibrillation session was an educational endeavor highlighting cardioprophylaxis and ablation techniques currently in use for atrial fibrillation treatment by cardiologists and cardiac surgeons but little know to stroke neurologists. Using a Controversy in Neurology approach that has been effective in the Archives of Neurology, the issues of Basilar Artery Thrombolysis and Stenting of Asymptomatic Carotid Arteries were addressed by pro and con presentations that were then summarized and adjudicated by Valdimir Hachinski. In the clinical trials section Justin Zivin summarized the latest trial results presented just days prior at the International Stroke Meeting in Brussells. The session also included presentations on drug-screening approaches from Parkinson trials and a session on nonconventional clinical trial design. A Special Lecture was added: Ed McCleskey, from the Vollum Institute, summarized his pioneering work on the pathophysiology of anginal pain.

The first Princeton Conference was financed by a $25 000 personal check from Mary Lasker. The current conference budget is now 10 times higher. Major financial support was provided by an educational grant from the National Institute of Health. Financial support was also received from AstraZeneca, Bayer, Cardinal Health, Johnson & Johnson, Legacy Health Systems, Merck, Neurobiological Technologies, Novo Nordisk, Oregon Health & Sciences University Neurology, Pfizer, Portland Development Commission, Renovious, Virogenomics and Wyeth. The organizers are extremely grateful for the support of these organizations.

The original Princeton Conferences had published Proceedings including transcriptions of the discussions so that the opinions and experience of investigators could be known more broadly. The place card seating, which has persisted, was instituted to assist in identifying the discussants whose comments were being recorded. The delay between the Conference and the publication of the Proceedings were substantial and attenuated the usefulness of the material. After the 24th Conference, organized by Dick Traystman, the proceedings were peer reviewed and rapidly published as a supplement to Stroke thus providing an international circulation. The same approach will be followed for this 25th Conference. This seems particularly appropriate as the idea for the journal Stroke came from Irving Wright and Clark H. Millikan during the 5th Princeton Conference, January 5 to 7, 1966.

The 26th Princeton Conference will be held in 2008 in Houston, Texas, with Jim Grotta as organizer.

References
25th Princeton Conference on Cerebrovascular Disease: Preface
Roger P. Simon

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