

The role of the International Union of Physiological Sciences in the scientific community in the present and future

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The 36th International Congress of Physiological Sciences is approaching within the year with the quadrennial Congress to be held in Kyoto from July 27 to August 1, 2009. To let the physiologists in Japan know the IUPS better, IUPS Council members will take turns in the months to come to provide Editorials for the Physiological Society of Japan Journal on its background, present state and future activities.

The 1st International Congress of Physiological Sciences was organized in Basel in 1889. Thereafter, they were held every three years, and in 1929 an informal, self-perpetuating 'Permanent Committee' was organized to carry on this tradition which it has successfully done ever since with the only interruptions occurring during the two world wars. At the Montreal meeting in 1953 the International Union of Physiological Sciences, or IUPS, was officially launched. Japan was one of the founding member countries. Originally the International Physiological Congresses included biochemists and pharmacologists, but in 1949 the biochemists started their own international congresses as did the pharmacologists shortly thereafter. In 1959 IUPS became a member of ICSU, the International Council of Scientific Unions.

As stated in its Constitution, the purposes of IUPS are exclusively scientific and educational. To this purpose the activities of the IUPS are (a) to encourage the advancement of the physiological sciences; (b) to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge in the field of physiological sciences; (c) to foster and encourage research in the field of physiological sciences; (d) to promote the International Congresses of Physiological Sciences; (e) to promote such other meetings as may be useful for the advancement of the development of physiological sciences; and (f) to promote such other measures as will contribute to the development of physiological sciences.

IUPS is administered by means of a quadrennial General Assembly, biannual Council (of 15 members) meetings, and annual meetings of the Executive Council (composed of President, two vice Presidents, Treasurer, Secretary General and Executive Secretary). The 4-year terms of Council and Executive Council members are limited to two. Eight Commissions and two Committees carry out concrete activities.

IUPS currently has 55 national members (Adhering Body), 6 regional members, 11 associate members, 2 affiliated members, and 15 special members. The Adhering Body is the official organization representing the physiological scientists of a country or territory, such as National Academy, Research Council, Royal Society, etc with the societies of physiological scientists designated as Supporting Societies. In countries or territories with no national representation the society of physiologists itself may be the Adhering Body. In Japan the Science Council of Japan is

the Adhering Body and the Physiological Society of Japan the Supporting Society.

Each Adhering Body can be represented by delegate(s) to the General Assembly. The number of delegates, and the voting number at the General Assembly, is determined by the category/size of the Body defined in By-Laws. Regional members are regional Unions of Physiological Sciences, such as FAOPS (Asia and Oceania), FEPS (Europe), LAAPS (South America) and AAPS (Africa) and can send observers to the General Assembly but without any voting rights. Associate Members are societies of those countries or regions where physiological science is not sufficiently developed to justify full membership. No dues are required of an Associate Member and it may send an observer but without vote to the meetings of the General Assembly. Affiliated Members are international scientific societies representing branches of science which overlap with physiology. They also may send an observer without vote to the meetings of the General Assembly. Special Members are research and development institutions and laboratories, industrial organizations and production units, and any other bodies or individuals interested in the aims of the Union.

The Finance of IUPS is supported by the annual dues of Adhering Bodies and the fee of Special Members. The annual budget of 2006 was US\$133,333, and the annual dues of Japan was US\$15,061.

The major activities of IUPS are quadrennial International Congresses, support of Congresses and small meetings held by the Regional Members and Commissions, bimonthly joint publication of a scientific journal *Physiology* with the American Physiological Society, and distribution of scientific news through our website. Recent Congresses were held in Vancouver (1985), Helsinki (1989), Glasgow (1993), Sankt Petersburg (1997), Christchurch (2001) and San Diego (2005).

The last IUPS Congress in Japan was held in 1965, the year after the Tokyo Olympic Games. That was the time when Japan had sufficiently recovered from its disastrous damage of the World War II to start to enjoy its economic prosperity. However, international scientific meetings were rarely held in Japan at that time, and the congress provided young Japanese physiologists a valuable opportunity to meet distinguished physiologists, such as Professors Huxley and Katz, well-known by name through their published papers but never met in person.

By the development of our social environment, particularly in travelling and communication, it has now been asked whether our conventional activity, such as International Congresses, should continue in its present form. IUPS thus set up a Long Range Planning Committee (Chairperson: Prof. Denis Noble) and discussed the future of IUPS. Prof. Yasunobu Okada, President of the Physiological Society of Japan participated in the discussion as a member of LRPC. They distributed questionnaire to member societies and individuals asking their opinion and based on their results and after a serious discussion, presented its report including recommendations to the IUPS Council in 2007. The 36 page report is now available on our website (<http://www.iups.org/Sections/Communications/FinalLRPCReport.pdf>) . The Committee has recommended continuation and extension of the International Congress because it offers an excellent opportunity to disseminate the cutting edge information on physiological sciences widely to the world,

including developing countries and regions, which reinforces the importance of our society being able to invite thousands of international physiologists to the congress in Kyoto in July.