

Strategic Research & Innovation Committee Minutes

Meeting #70
October 12th, 2016
12:00 – 1:30 pm
HBI Boardroom (HRIC 1A06)

Keith Sharkey (Chair)

Stephanie Borgland, Chantal Debert, Roger Thompson, Susan Graham, Nathalie Jetté, Oury Monchi, Shalina Ousman, Patrick Whelan, Andrew Demchuk, Andrew Bulloch

Regrets: Quentin Pittman, Bruce Pike, Eric Smith, Naweed Syed, Cam Teskey

Raj Clair (standing in for the HBI research coordinator).

Welcome:

Dr. Sharkey welcomed SRIC members to the October 12th meeting.

Approval of agenda:

The SRIC committee reviewed and approved the agenda as circulated.

Approval of minutes (September 12th, 2016):

The September 12th (meeting #69) SRIC minutes were reviewed and approved as circulated.

Report from the Chair (Dr. Keith Sharkey):

Dr. Sharkey thanked Stephanie Borgland for stepping up to take over the Research Day Committee. Dr. Borgland informed the committee that she took the advice of the committee and survey and as such research day will bring in an exceptional keynote speaker in Lorna Role, from Stony Brook University School of Medicine. Lorna's focus is on cholinergic circuits in the brain and mechanisms of cholinergic neurotransmission. Dr. Borgland stated there will be more information about Research Day as it nears.

Dr. Sharkey updated the committee regarding the dashboard for analysis of HBI progress – It is being updated with 2015 data and he will share more when updated, but they are weeks behind due to malware crash, etc.

Recruitment:

The recruitment update was previously circulated by Dr. Sharkey as a summary table – no new comments or opinions on it.

Pilot Funding Competition:

Ouri Monchi is running the pilot funding competition this year.

HBI Evaluation Strategy:

Dr. Sharkey stated that HBI evaluations have been done by an external advisory committee in the past every two or three years, but that this is an expensive undertaking. It was pointed out that it may not justify the costs for the benefit. As such HBI executive have decided to change the way evaluation is done – by asking a smaller but focused committee for the evaluation of research and education separately. Before there may have been too little time for each set of reviews.

The proposal has come forward that was approved by executive to have a program evaluation with a small group of people, starting with HBI Education in 2017 and with approval/consent, research in 2018 - which will give the neuro teams 2-3 years of progress and will allow the institute to have a reasonable level of evaluation and will probably be done by spring of 2018. No criteria for evaluation was mentioned yet, will be defined ourselves over the next few months. There were no objections to this proposal of 2018 for a research evaluation

The committee was also updated on space evaluation. Is very much in progress and is being taken very seriously by faculty and institute. Goal and hope is for it to allow for new space in basement of HSC in order to free up space in Heritage Medical Building, and to allow expansion room in Heritage and to hopefully consolidate the animal behavior work closer to the ARC – meaning less movement for the animals – better for the stress studies. Dr. Sharkey did note however, that updates for space are going slowly.

Dr. Sharkey also noted that everyone has been very busy with CIHR grant applications – he has not heard numbers, but certainly there about 30 applicants at least.

The bridge funding results were also released – after last meeting he was able to confirm that two members who submitted renewals were approved. They were the highest ranked renewal applications that had not been funded through either CIHR or the faculty bridge competitions. Dr. Sharkey pointed out how this is good news as it's really helping people who justify and deserve funding. Next competition will be very tough. Funding rate will be probably end up being around 10% or perhaps lower.

NeuroTeam Updates:

Stroke NeuroTeam:

Dr. Roger Thompson highlighted the composition of the stroke NeuroTeam - 25 members. Mostly clinical faculty, 6 basic scientists on the list – reflects the general picture of stroke research here in Calgary. Dr. Thompson mentioned how he is the only pure basic stroke research scientist remaining at this time.

Major activities – put together team for BMH funds, did not get funded but a good trial run working

together as a team. Using some of money to support an MRI journal club. One of the biggest activities led by Sean Dukelow – Calgary joined the Canadian program for stroke recovery. Opportunity to leverage funding from them.

Dr. Demchuk is working closely with Barb Giba to develop a funding document for the Faculty of Medicine to identify needs of clinical research program. He stated the biggest challenge is trying to find a way to marry clinicians and scientists, with the biggest obstacle of time. As a result the action will be taken to try to set up more regular meetings.

Continued progress of planning a retreat for the group – Jan 12/13 at COP. Dr. Thompson added that on the clinical end of things, Calgary is leading two large clinical trials; both trials potentially being practice changing if successful.

Dr. Demchuk added that he is running a large meeting in December – The 1st in the world that is bringing all the clinical trial networks together to be more efficient, supportive and collaborative (to be held in Niagara).

General discussion

Offering a basic neuroscience course for non-medical/science students was suggested. To bring in people with different backgrounds to do neuroscience graduate work and to foster more collaboration between different departments in the future, e.g. computer science, physics, etc. It was asked whether members would be willing to take in a computer science summer student or physics summer student (perhaps Campus Alberta Neuroscience could help us?).

Others shared thoughts on main campus successful strategies. It was suggested that a more cohesive HBI strategy to take the NeuroTeam and each present for 5-10 minutes on main campus to potentially interested Departments /Faculties - Dr. Sharkey said he would put this on his agenda and reach out to colleagues on Campus.

Note added after the meeting: Brandi Chuchman has recently reached out to these faculties

Mental Health NeuroTeam

It was noted by Andy Bulloch that the Mental Health Neuro team lacks a leader. Dr. Bulloch is taking on sole leadership for time being but there is a meeting in November to discuss with team members. Dr. Bulloch added that he has begun a mental health in schools project which is working with the Rocky View School Board to look at mental health in children and the link to school successes. Additionally, Dr. Bulloch added that the Headstrong Intervention Program (to combat stigma for mental health in high schools) has been very successful but never actually tested in experimental control situations.

Traumatic Brain Injury NeuroTeam:

Dr. Chantal Debert broke down the TBI team to 21 members (2/3 clinical and 1/3 basic science), with 30-35 trainees roughly. Team is mostly focused on concussion and not major TBI.

Dr. Debert added that she has arranged a retreat day at Hotel Alma for her team with a goal of melding basic science with clinicians. She identified the basic challenge is just getting everyone together, but that she has seen more collaborations since this whole process started. Additionally, she reminded the committee of the upcoming Gairdner Symposium (Nov 28 and 29). Part of the symposium will include a public forum on concussions with both athletes and parents on panel. Five international researchers will attend the symposium and additionally there will be a poster session in afternoon (held in HSC). Dr. Debert also mentioned there will be more of a concussion initiative – 6 summer studentships, 2 master students, 1 PhD and 1 postdoc through this program, all in the past year and a half. The team has a strong commitment to raising awareness nationally and internationally.

Stress NeuroTeam:

Dr. Borgland informed committee that they are at 12 members now, mostly basic neuroscientists. Active participant in Optogenetics, indicated the success of Think Big – talks that are given by HBI members at City of Calgary Public Library and are widely successful. Additionally, was successful in acquiring stress meeting 2018 – Gordon conference style with ~200 people. Lastly, Dr. Borgland informed the committee that she is planning to hold one day strategic meeting on campus around Jan 12th. This would include neuro team vision and planning and discussion on infrastructure/training presentations and workshop breakout sessions.

It was also suggested by Dr. Sharkey that there is an opportunity to reach out to clinical groups or clinicians of varying interests to see if there is an opportunity to integrate the basic science done into a more clinically orientated outcomes for translational research. Some potential faculty were discussed.

Spinal Cord, Nerve Injury and Pain NeuroTeam:

Dr. Whelan stated that there are now 25 members - approximately 6-10 basic scientists and the rest clinical – spread over many faculties.

Recent accomplishments: Symposium had members of community along with trainees and PIs concentrated on spinal cord injury. Some of the Alberta charities attended as well as people with injuries. Part two of symposia on Dec 19th presents in essence some of the ideas put together as a result of patient input. Dr. Sharkey stated that this integrated knowledge translation is critical for growth of the Teams and congratulated the team.

Dr. Whelan also stated as others have before that the biggest challenge at times is the lack of administrative support. Members were encouraged to communicate the stumbling blocks they are facing to HBI and CSM leadership.

MS NeuroTeam:

Dr. Shalina Ousman informed the committee that she now has 13 members on her NeuroTeam. The team was awarded funding from the Alberta Translational Research Fund as well they were successful in the BMH competition

Dr. Ousman also informed the committee of the monthly journal club, which enables them to have an excellent think tank. Dr. Sharkey wanted to reinforce this idea to other NeuroTeams as this tends to

promote further collaboration. He also noted this is a great opportunity for trainees, as it motivates them for research

Movement Disorders NeuroTeam:

Dr. Monchi noted that his NeuroTeam has about 20 members. The team has created a regular movement disorders meeting, which involves everyone from students, to medical staff to nurses – purpose of having everyone in the clinic involved from the get go. Two mini retreats have been held to date to create bonds between members, which have really helped.

Dr. Monchi also stated that there is a major event coming up in July 2017—a major international symposium that will be a satellite to MDS (International Parkinson’s and Movement disorders society) and will focus on biomarkers (MDS will fund most of it). Additionally, Dr. Monchi noted that they just received approval for Calgary Parkinson’s research initiative to create a registry and database for everyone who is being treated for Parkinson’s in Calgary.

Epilepsy NeuroTeam:

Dr. Jetté informed the committee that her team now has at 21 members (9 basic scientists, 9 clinicians, 3 translational scientists). Some members are on the national Canadian League Against Epilepsy board. She noted the many active interactions and collaborations of the team and the success of the team at the recent BMH funding competition. The international reach of the team will be highlighted as it was announced the HBI Epilepsy Symposium would be held in May next year with our partners from the University of Melbourne/Florey Institute.

Update from CAT and Infrastructure (Dr. Quentin Pittman):

Deferred

Next meeting: November 22, 2016

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 pm.