

PRESS RELEASE

Berlin Brain Works: Epicure 3rd Annual Meeting Charite Universitaetsmedizin Berlin 6-8th February 2009

Over 100 participants attended the 3rd Annual Meeting of the Epicure project, which was held at the Charite Universitaetsmedizin, Berlin, Germany, from 6-8th February 2009.

The kickoff session on 6th February was organized in the HS Nervenlinik building, which, as Prof Heinemann informed us, has had a checkered history, being actually the site where, before WWII, the then Professor of Genetics and Neurology selected patients, including persons with epilepsy, who were eventually sterilised for so called 'medical reasons'.

The meeting was opened by Prof Giuliano Avanzini, coordinator Epicure, who described the present status of the project, now practically half way through its 48 months. Carla Finocchiaro from CF Consulting, went over some of the management aspects of Epicure. Janet Mifsud from the Dissemination Board, described how this year Epicure participants have produced several scientific publications and presented Epicure results at several conferences, and how a Google search for Epicure has increased to over 10,000 hits. She emphasized the importance of reaching out and informing other scientists, patient organizations and the lay media about the project.

The meeting then continued with an overview of the various workpackages in Epicure. During these sessions, young investigators and PIs presented some of the data from the numerous scientific publications that have emerged from the project over the last year. The first day focussed on SP3, Acquired Channelopathy and Neuronal Network Reorganisation and SP5, Pharmacogenetics of Refractory Epilepsy, Mechanism of Drug Resistance and New Therapeutic Strategies. Data from the Epicure Brain Databank was presented that showed the importance of having a European critical mass in the collection of such samples. Professor Heinemann underlined the importance of having valid models in epilepsy research that can help by leading to an *epi 'cure'* for patients with his now famous quote: '*the best model of a cat is a cat*'.

During the second day the emphasis was progress made in SP1 and SP2 workpackages ie Genetics of Human Epilepsy and Functional Consequences of Mutations in Ion Channel Genes and updates from SP4 ie Epilepsy and Development. The session were interspersed with ample time for questions and discussions.

In his concluding remarks, Prof Avanzini commented on the positive effect that Epicure has had on the stimulation of new co-operation between scientific researchers and partners in Epicure.

The official meeting then continued with the organization of a week-long hands-on training session in the Institute of Neurophysiology at the Charite, which was attended by over 50 participants including young researchers, tutors and lecturers.

The days during which Epicure was held coincided with the Berlin Film Festival. Epicure may not have been so glamorous nor attracted as much media attention as the more famous festival, but the very active interaction, networking and fruitful discussions among the participants certainly made up for this.

The co-operation of the colleagues in Prof Heinemann's department (especially Sonja), CF consulting, the German League Against Epilepsy, all, under the excellent chairmanship of Prof Giuliano Avanzini, is acknowledged for the successful organisation of this meeting.