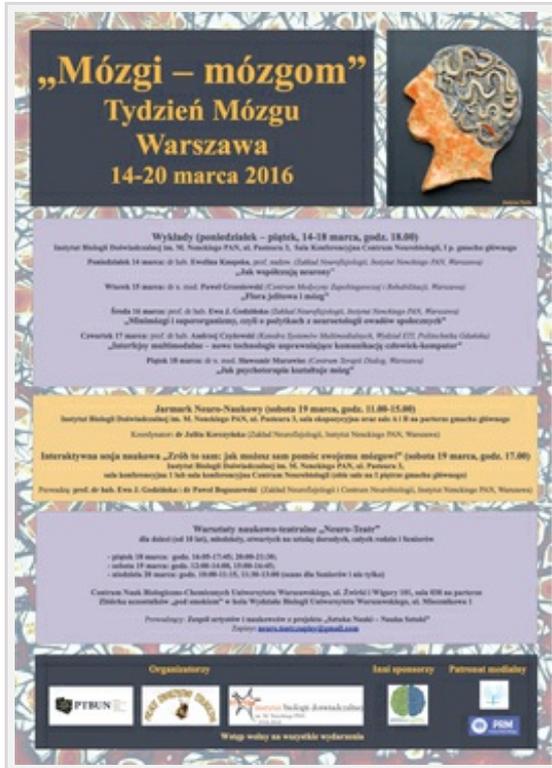


Nencki Institute of Experimental Biology

Brain Awareness Week 2016 at the Nencki Institute

2016-03-24



During the period 14th-20th March 2016 the Nencki Institute PAS hosted a cycle of popular science events „Brains For Brains” taking place as part of the Brain Awareness Week 2016 in Warsaw. The organisers of that event were Polish Neuroscience Society (PTBUN), Polish Ethological Society (PTEtoI.) and Nencki Institute of Experimental Biology PAS, with an additional support of Faculty of Biology of the University of Warsaw. Additional sponsoring was also provided by the firm Brainshop.pl offering products promoting more healthy and more efficient brain work, and media patronage was provided by the NeuroPositive Foundation and Polish Brain Council (PRM). The motto of this year - „Brains For Brains” – expressed the conviction of the organisers that we ourselves may contribute to even more successful actions aimed at the prevention and treatment of brain disorders by broadening and promoting our knowledge about the brain.

During this year’s Brain Awareness Week it was possible to attend five lectures presenting various issues related to the advances in our knowledge about the brain and its functioning. The inaugural lecture entitled „How neurons sympathize” was delivered by Professor Ewelina Knapska from the Laboratory of Neurobiology of Emotions of the Department of Neurophysiology of the Nencki Institute on Monday the 14th March. Professor Knapska presented, among others, the results of the research devoted to neurobiological correlates of empathy and to the influence of social context on fear extinction in rodents. On Tuesday the 15th March Paweł Grzesiowski, M.D., from Center for Preventive Medicine and Rehabilitation in Warsaw delivered a lecture entitled „The intestinal flora and the brain”, during which he presented a detailed review of information illustrating the influence exerted on brain functioning by processes taking place in the gut, and, in particular, the effects of presence of microorganisms inhabiting the gut. The next lecture entitled „Mini-brains and superorganisms, or about the benefits of neuroethology of social insects” was delivered by Professor Ewa J. Godzińska from the Laboratory of Ethology of the Department of Neurophysiology of the Nencki Institute on Wednesday the 16th March. After the discussion of brain anatomy of social insects and of neurochemical processes taking place in the brains of social insects, she presented the data illustrating the influence of social context on behaviour and phenotype of social insects, including the possibility of reversal of ageing processes. On Thursday the 17th

March Professor Andrzej Czyżewski from the Multimedia Systems Department of the Faculty of Electronics, Telecommunications and Informatics of the Gdansk University of Technology delivered the lecture entitled „Multimodal interfaces – new technologies facilitating man-computer communication”, in which he presented, among others, the system „CyberEye” making possible the communication with persons in vegetative state. Finally, on Friday the 19th March Sławomir Murawiec, M.D., from the Center of Therapy Dialogue in Warsaw in his lecture entitled „How psychotherapy shapes the brain” presented a review of various facts related to that issue. All the lectures raised considerable interest: the conference hall was always full to bursting, and the members of the audience could broaden their knowledge about various issues raised by the lecturers also during long discussions allowing the lecturers to explain various matters so far not wholly clear, and to pass many additional informations.

On Saturday the 19th March during the late morning (11.00 – 15.00) in the exhibition hall on the first floor of the Institute’s main building and in the adjacent rooms took place the Neuroscience Fair, the forum presenting various forms of actions contributing to better brain functioning and prevention of brain disorders and/or alleviation of their symptoms. During the Fair the visitors could visit 22 stalls promoting the knowledge about a broad spectre of issues ranging from various modes of application of computer techniques up to secrets of biology of various living organisms, from humans via mammals (rodents, dogs) and reptiles (turtles) up to invertebrates (ants), and even plants, which are not equipped with brains, and yet can communicate.

On Saturday afternoon took place an interactive scientific session „Do it yourself: how you can yourself help your own brain” led by Dr. Paweł Boguszewski and Professor Ewa J. Godzińska from the Neurobiology Center and Laboratory of Ethology of the Nencki Institute. At the start of the session Dr. Boguszewski conducted an open quiz entitled „Brainmyths and sciencenonsense” with the aim of rectification of numerous erroneous beliefs related to various aspects brain biology. Then, in a similar way Professor Godzińska presented to the audience various ways allowing us to exert beneficial influence on functioning of our brains and on our behaviour. This meeting, too, was accompanied by the discussion making possible futher broadening of knowledge about the discussed issues.

The celebrations of this year’s Brain Awareness Week (Friday 18th March - Sunday 20th March) also included six performances of the scientific-theatre workshop „Neuro-Theatre” for children, young people, adults, entire families and senior citizens organized by the team of artists and scientists from the project „Art of Science – Science of Art”. The performances took place in the Biological and Chemical Research Centre of the University of Warsaw, but they formed an integral part of the cycle of popular science events „Brains For Brains” taking place as part of the Brain Awareness Week 2016 in the Nencki Institute.

The success of this year's Brain Awareness Week resulted from collaboration of very numerous persons from various institutions. Detailed informations about all contributors to that success will be soon available in a separate document, but already now we would like to present all of them our most hearty thanks.

For the team of organisers

Ewa J. Godzińska