

# Nencki Institute of Experimental Biology

## Brain Awareness Week at the Nencki Institute

2017-03-29

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During the week 13-18 of March 2017, world Brain Awareness Week events took place at the Nencki Institute. This year we organized five lectures under motto: "Brain: facts and myths". The lectures approached the topics that are controversial and raise wide public interest. On Monday 13th, inaugural lecture was given by dr Lidia Jureczko from The II Clinic of Anesthesiology and Intensive Care of the Warsaw Medical University, who talked about the nature of coma and available therapies. On March 14th we hosted professor Jerzy Leszek, professor of psychiatry at the Medical University in Wroclaw, vice –director of the Psychiatry Department and head of Alzheimer's Disease Lab, with a lecture on new facts about Alzheimer's disease origin and therapy. On Wednesday March 15th an interesting lecture was given by dr Mirosław Czuczwar from The II Clinic of Anesthesiology and Intensive Care of Lublin Medical University, on toxic influence of anesthesia on the brain. Next day, on Thursday, dr Bogusław Habrat from the Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology, in a competent and balanced way talked about the pros and cons of "medical marijuana". On Friday, March 17th we hosted a renowned expert on dyslexia, professor Marta Bogdanowicz, the founder of Polish Dyslexia Association and lecturer at SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities, who presented paradoxes, facts and myths on dyslexia and talked about life of people suffering from this disorder. All the lectures raised a great deal of interest. The audience enjoyed the possibility to ask many questions, and after the lecture, to personally engage in conversation with the lecturer.

On the first day of the Week the prize for the best model of neuron was awarded. There were two winners: in age category "Lower Secondary School" the prize went to Piotr Walczak, the student of the 3rd class of The Duchess Izabela Czartoryska Lower Secondary School No 93 in Warsaw, the author of an ecologic neuron, build of pieces of carrot leaves, parsley root and cherry tomatos. The second winner, in age category "secondary school", was Małgorzata Walczak from Cyprian Kamil Norwid Secondary School in Wyszaków, who created a sophisticated neuron-candlestick.

On Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> March the Brain Day for Kids took place, organized in the exhibition hall of the Institute's main building and in the adjacent seminar rooms . For our young guests we prepared a bunch of displays, presentations, games and tests, as well as the neuroanatomical exhibition: "Brain: how it looks from the outside and inside". The interest in the event has surpassed our wildest expectations. We hosted over 500 visitors of various

ages, from kindergarten children to seniors, from all Mazovia district, not only from Warsaw. For the youngest guests we had rebuses, colouring pages and brain modeling from plasticine. Older ones could visit stalls presenting e.g. the anatomy and cellular structure of the brain, human brain and body models, visual illusions and modern equipment for investigations of animal behaviour. Many children were eager to have a short EEG examination carried out. As always, crowds were gathering at the tables with ants and other insects. Neuroanatomical exhibition attracted young and old. The visitors were waiting in queues to see microscopic preparations from various animal brains.

The success of this year Brain Awareness Week was a result of hard work of many people. The Nencki PhD Student Council made a great effort to assemble a crew, and during Saturday the members of the Council had an eye on everything. The student crew worked very hard, talking, presenting, explaining and discussing things with their guests. Also, students from Student Neurobiology Association of the Warsaw University were present with their presentation and Students associated in Student Anatomical Association of Warsaw Medical University presented professional models of human brain and body. ANIMALAB provided for presentation modern equipment for animal behaviour studies as well as EEG device, which was operated by Federico Cardona Rocha from AD Instruments. The skulls and brains for exhibition were kindly lent out by The Department of Paleobiology and Evolution at the Faculty of Biology of the Warsaw University. The event was supported by European Dana Alliance for the Brain (EDAB), Nencki Institute, Polish Society for Neuroscience and Polish Academy of Sciences. To all who participated, and also to our sponsors – most grateful thanks.

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