

## 2nd Florida Fragile X Young Investigators Conference

By Karen Fay

Recruiting and retaining well-trained young scientists in Fragile X research is a critical task for the Fragile X community. The Second Annual Florida FX Young Investigators Conference in April was another giant step in that direction, bringing such scientists together with more senior FX researchers to cultivate the discussion and scientific collaboration that are so critical to moving new research forward.

The conference was held at Airport Hilton in West Palm Beach, under the joint sponsorship of Scripps Research Institute and the National Fragile X Foundation. Gary Bassell of Emory University, Karen Usdin of the NIH, David Nelson of Baylor College of Medicine, Giovanni Neri of the Catholic University of Rome, and Claes Wahlestedt of Scripps Research Institute made presentations as members of the conference's Scientific Organizing Committee. They worked tirelessly to achieve a casual, friendly environment in which young investigators could present their work directly to each other and to a receptive audience of noted FX researchers.

Speakers also included Dr. Richard Paylor of Baylor College of Medicine, Dr. Hollis Cline of The Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, CA, Dr. Randall Carpenter of Seaside Therapeutics in Cambridge, MA, and Dr. Elizabeth M. Berry-Kravis of RUSH University Medical Center in Chicago, IL. Together, they provided a comprehensive view of FX research over the years and framed the discussions of the most important new concepts.

Young Investigators presented seven posters and made 14 oral presentations during the three-day meeting. Judges struggled to choose two winning posters, finally settling on The relationship between dendritic branch behavior and CPEB-labeled RNP granules captured in vivo, by Jennifer Bestman of Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, and Dysregulation of mTOR signaling in fragile X syndrome by Ali Sharma of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Each won \$750.

Originally, three oral presentations were to be selected to win \$1,250 each, but the conference organizing committee found it impossible to choose just three. NFXF Director Emeritus Harris Hollin and Barbara Noble of Scripps Florida thus agreed to offer support for a fourth award. Chosen were: Susan Goebel-Goody of the Yale University Child Study Center, Striatal-Enriched protein tyrosine Phosphatase: A potential new therapeutic target for Fragile X Syndrome?; Cheryl Gatto, Vanderbilt University, Temporal requirements of Fragile X mental retardation protein in modulating circadian rhythms and clock neuron architecture; Zane Zeier, the University of Florida, Fragile X mental retardation protein replacement restores hippocampal synaptic function in a mouse model of fragile X; and Charlotte D'Hulst, The University of Antwerp, In vivo quantification of GABA(A) receptors in brain of fragile X patients using [<sup>11</sup>C]Flumazenil Positron Emission Tomography (PET).

Small enough to provide ample opportunity for one-to-one conversations, and important enough attract many of the field's most seasoned researchers, the Young Investigators Conference plays an important role in maintaining the momentum of new Fragile X research.