



SPECIAL ISSUE

Drug Discrimination in Behavioural Neuroscience: Introduction

This special issue of *Pharmacology Biochemistry and Behavior* contains papers based on the oral and poster presentations at the Fifth International Meeting On Drug Discrimination that took place in Beerse (Antwerp), Belgium on August 30–September 1 1998 (Fig. 1). The meeting was organised by the Society for Stimulus Properties of Drugs. The main themes of the meeting were the applications of drug discrimination to drug abuse and drug discovery research and it was a satellite of the biennial congress of the European Behavioural Pharmacology Society that took place in Brno (Czech State) immediately afterwards.

The meeting was organised by Theo Meert with the support of a small committee comprised of Ian Stolerman (President of SSPD), Nancy Ator, Kathryn Cunningham Wouter Koek and David Sanger. The organisers and SSPD are most grateful to the many participants and supporters of the many who helped to make it a stimulating and successful event; the Janssen Research Foundation was the major sponsor that hosted the meeting, and other sponsors included British-American Tobacco, Lilly Industries Ltd, Institute de Recherche Pierre Fabre, Merck & Co Inc., Pfizer, Sandown Scientific, Solvay Pharmaceuticals B.V. and Synthelabo. We also wish to thank the editors and publisher of *Pharmacology Biochemistry and Behavior* for the opportunity to publish the proceedings in the journal.

Scientific meetings come and go, and it is often difficult to define a unique feature to distinguish them. There was one characteristic of this meeting which was perhaps unusual and that was the sense of comradeship among the participants, a shared interest in each-others' work when it often had relatively little direct implication for one's own. Individual sessions in the meeting were organised around issues and applications in drug discrimination and not around specific drug classes of disease states. Thus, within a session, data were presented on an extraordinary variety of drugs, a potpourri whose diversity is rarely equalled in other meetings. Within a session therefore, there were presentations on antipsychotics, calcium channel ligands, serotonergics, antidepressants and anxiolytics. Another session ranged from GABAA agonists, through excitatory amino acids, opioids and hallucinogens, to drugs acting at dopamine receptors. The audience was thus required to be constantly shifting their pharmacological orientation from one receptor and drug class to another, while retaining a focus on the behavioural features and issues that transcend pharmacological class. The fact that the great majority of participants were prepared to do this, and seemed to enjoy the experience, is testament to the continuing integrity and appeal of drug discrimination research.

Theo Meert
Ian Stolerman

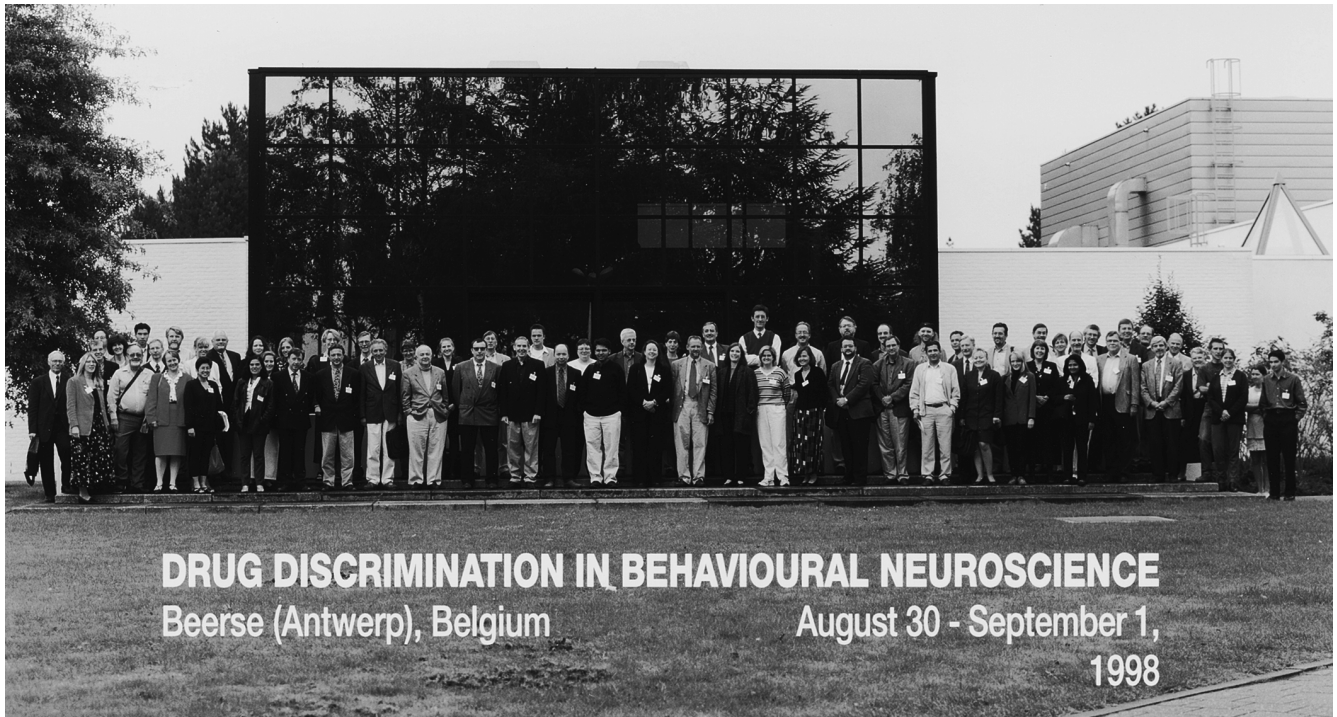


FIG. 1. Attendees, Drug Discrimination in Behavioural Neuroscience, August 30–September 1, 1998.