Sixth Scientific Meeting of the TMJ Association: Comorbid Chronic Pain Conditions—Mechanisms, Diagnosis, and Treatments June 5–7, 2011 Bethesda, Maryland, USA

This meeting, held June 5–7, 2011, at the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) in Bethesda, MD, was founded on the theme that the most debilitating temporomandibular joint (TMJ) diseases and disorders are often associated with other conditions, such as fibromyalgia, chronic headache, chronic fatigue, irritable bowel syndrome, vulvodynia, interstitial cystitis, and endometriosis. Once again, Allen Cowley, Jr, PhD, chair of the Scientific Program Committee, organized a timely and inspiring conference that provided the impetus for future transformational science.

Following welcome speeches by Terrie Cowley, president and co-founder of the TMJ Association, Ltd, a Milwaukee-based patient advocacy group, and Drs Story C. Landis, director of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke; Vivian W. Pinn, director of the Office of Research on Women's Health; and Larry A. Tabak, principal deputy director, NIH, a concise overview of what we know and do not know about comorbid pain conditions, including the role of the somatomotor and autonomic nervous systems, was provided by Dr Wilfrid Jänig. The first day ended with a round table panel involving patient advocates K. Kimberly McCleary, president, Chronic Fatigue and Immune Function Syndrome (CFIDS) Association of America; Mary Lou Ballweg, president, Endometriosis Association; Christin L. Veasley, executive director, National Vulvodynia Association; and Terrie Cowley.

The scientific presentations were grouped into four sessions: *(1)* Epidemiology and clinical definition of chronic pain conditions, *(2)* Translational comorbid chronic pain conditions research and therapeutic developments, *(3)* Experimental models and systems approaches to address mechanisms of chronic pain and related comorbid conditions, and *(4)* Approaches and emerging findings from large cohort studies, focusing on risk domains and determinants of comorbid chronic pain conditions. Overall, this part of the program featured 20 well-established scientists.

On the last day of the meeting, participants addressed a series of questions in four breakout sessions that dealt with *(a)* the epidemiology and sex differences in comorbid chronic pain conditions, *(b)* the diagnosis of comorbid pain conditions (phenotypes, genotypes, and biopsychosocial factors), *(c)* basic and translational studies, and *(d)* possible next-generation therapies for these comorbid pain conditions.

The meeting concluded with a series of recommendations, such as the execution of prospective, population-based epidemiologic studies, capturing the natural history of these pain conditions, the development of valid case definitions, the standardization of the nomenclature and testing procedures, and the creation and maintenance of a databank.

At the conclusion of the breakout sessions, there was little doubt that this meeting set the stage for a broader inquiry into TMJ diseases and disorders, calling for a paradigm-shifting direction in research and the care of patients that no longer permits the isolated view of these comorbid conditions.

Christian Stohler
Associate Editor