Press Release: Baltimore, March 19, 2018

Topic: We Have a Winner: A National Neuroscience Competition for High School Students

USA Brain Bee Championship

The Eleventh USA National Brain Bee Championship was held in Baltimore on March 16 to 18, 2018. The Brain Bee is a neuroscience competition for teenagers. Winners (Group photo is attached) from 54 Chapter competitions in 37 states came to compete at the University of Maryland, Baltimore to test their knowledge of the human brain including such topics as intelligence, emotions, memory, sleep, vision, hearing, sensations, Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, schizophrenia, addictions and brain research. The competition involved a neuroanatomy laboratory practical exam with real human brains, patient diagnosis with patient actors, neurohistology, brain MRI imaging identification and orals. It is sponsored by the Department of Neural and Pain Sciences of the University of Maryland School of Dentistry.

The winner is Akhil Kondepudi from St. Louis, Missouri. (An individual photo is attached). Akhil will represent the United States at the World Brain Bee Championship hosted by the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies in July. Besides a monetary prize he was also given an 8-week internship in a neuroscience laboratory. A donation is also given to the Disabled American Veterans.

Second place went to Hemanth Asirvatham of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Third place went to Sehej Bindra of Piscataway, New Jersey. Colin Wood from Worcester, Massachusetts came in fourth; Sneha Shinde from Rootstown, Ohio came in fifth; Aayush Setty from Atlanta, Georgia came in sixth; Lasya Kambhampati from Kansas City, Kansas came in seventh; Veda Chanda from Hershey, Pennsylvania came in eighth; Sarah Shirley from Little Rock, Arkansas came in ninth; and Jessica Goldstein from Hempstead, New York came in tenth. (Attached is the list of all the Chapter winners who competed in the USA National Championship.)

The keynote address was given by Dr. Marcela Romero-Reyes, DDS, PhD, Director of the University of Maryland Brotman Facial Pain Clinic. The event was coordinated by Angela Choi and Ricky Lim of the University of Maryland, and Alexander Skvortsov of the International Youth Neuroscience Association. Dozens of volunteers were University of Maryland School of Dentistry Students. Judges included
Dr. Paul Shepard of the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center, Dr. Vikas Saxena of the University of Maryland Medical School, and Natasha Topolski of the National Institutes of Mental Health.

The USA Brain Bee is an Official Regional Brain Bee of the International Brain Bee which is lead by a Board of Directors from the Society for Neuroscience, the American Psychological Association, the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives, The International Brain Research Organization, and the Federation of European Neurosciences Societies. Currently there are about 200 Brain Bee Chapters in about 50 countries in 6 continents. Each Chapter conducts a competition involving many high schools. Those winners represent their cities at their respective National Championships. Each National Champion is then invited to compete in the World Championship held every year in a different city. Past and future venues for the World Championship include Copenhagen, Denmark; San Diego, United States; Vienna, Austria; Cape Town, South Africa, Baltimore, United States; Toronto, Canada; Berlin, Germany; Cairns, Australia; Montreal, Canada; Florence, Italy; Grenada, West Indies; and Washington, DC, United States.

Dr. Norbert Myslinski (Photo with winner is attached) founded the International Brain Bee twenty years ago and says “Its purpose is to motivate young students to learn about the human brain and inspire them to seek careers in the basic and clinical neurosciences to help treat and find cures for brain disorders. We build better brains to fight brain disorders.” Dr. Myslinski was the 2016 Science Educator of the Year as determined by the international organization The Society for Neuroscience.

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