

# 2006 Spring Symposium Review

By Amy Arcus

The topic for the Spring Meeting was “Aging and Older Adults.” The four speakers provided very interesting information and recent research findings that led to thought provoking questions and stimulating discussions. Dr. Paola Timiras (UCB) led off the meeting with a presentation on neuroplasticity in older adults. She discussed ways by which the brains of older adults may compensate for decreased function, including the recruitment of neighboring neurons and the ability of the brain to reprogram itself (e.g., the visual cortex being activated by auditory stimuli in persons who became blind during adulthood).

The second speaker was Dr. Gordon Lithgow (Buck Institute for Age Research) who discussed insulin signaling, the regulation of the heat shock response, and cell cycle checkpoint pathways in *C. elegans*, and why *C. elegans* is an excellent model for aging research. Following lunch, Dr. Andrew Olaharski (Roche – Palo Alto) presented his studies on yeast which showed that the flavoring agent dihydrocoumarin increases p53 acetylation and apoptosis, sensitizes cells to DNA damage, and targets for inhibition an enzyme associated with longevity (*sir2*).

The final speaker was Dr. Mary Ann Grecco (SRI) who discussed her studies in rats showing differing protein expressions between young and old in the brain during sleep. These findings, among other things, may tie in with neuroplasticity processes of older adults. The meeting wrapped up with a question and answer panel discussion. Attendees considered the meeting a true success.