
Thirty years (and more) of hair research societies



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In the last 3 decades, tremendous advances have been made in the field of hair research, an often overlooked subspecialty of dermatology. The hair follicle is regarded as one of the most ideal

miniorgans to tackle key biological questions in other organ systems, and discoveries have a profound impact in many areas of medicine. Notable scientific advances include identification of hair



Fig 1. Meeting of the International Federation of Hair Research Societies at the 10th World Congress for Hair Research, October 31–November 3, 2017, in Kyoto, Japan. *Left to right:* Maria Bianca Piraccini, Gill Westgate, Ken Washenik, Wilma Bergfeld, Maria Hordinsky, Ryoji Tsuboi, Satoshi Itami, Won-Soo Lee, Abraham Zlotogorski, Rodney Sinclair, Victoria Ceh, and Gwang Seong Choi.

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Fig 2. Attendees at the 9th World Congress for Hair Research, November 18-21, 2015, in Miami, Florida.

follicle stem cells, establishment of the hair follicle immune privilege concept, development of *in vivo* hair follicle reconstitution assays, and the deeper dissection of pathophysiology of hair loss disorders leading to the development of novel therapeutic approaches.

In large part, the advances are due to organized medicine. There are 5 recognized hair research societies that together represent the International Federation of Hair Research Societies (Fig 1). It is through these societies' programs, including promoting and funding research in hair disorders, encouraging collaborations between researchers, providing mentorship and travel grants for young investigators, and disseminating information at conferences, especially world congresses (Fig 2), that the field has grown and made important scientific advances beyond the discipline of hair research.

The pioneer **European Hair Research Society** celebrates its 30th anniversary. Dominique van Neste organized its first meeting in Brussels, and its first president, Rodney Dawber, inspired clinical research and also the study of hair fiber science. Early developmental biology pioneers, Colin Jahoda and Roy Oliver, showed how important the dermal papilla is for hair regeneration, now a substantial area of innovation all over the world.

American Hair Research Society (1990) held its founders meeting with a group of 13 dermatologists dedicated to furthering research in hair-related disorders. The late David Whiting instilled the

importance of the scalp biopsy in diagnosing causes of hair shedding, and more recently, stem cell biology research "borrowed" the hair follicle after the significance of the "bulge" was proposed by George Cotsarelis in the early 1990s, leading to the understanding of stem cells in skin.

Society for Hair Science Research-Japan (1993), founded by Hideoki Ogawa, has since encouraged strong international collaboration and researcher exchanges, with important emphasis on developing approaches to treatments for hair loss through understanding the potential of dermal papilla cells in regenerative medicine.

Australasian Hair and Wool Research Society (1995), founded by Rod Sinclair, George Rogers, and Les Jones, spurred on by the growth and commercial importance of the wool industry in Australia and New Zealand, is still contributing the basis for understanding fiber structure and texture as well as providing some of the earliest studies in the biology of the follicle.

Korean Hair Research Society (1998), founded by dermatologist Byung In Ro, was originally a part of the Korean Dermatological Association and then became an independent society in 2004. Won Soo Lee has since ensured that the Korean hair research community made a global impact through a world congress in 2014 and advances in clinical evaluation methods for androgenetic alopecia, relevant in Southeast Asia.