

NAME OF SPECIALTY SECTION Neurotoxicology (NTSS)

ANNUAL REPORT: 2011-2012

May 1, 2011 to April 30, 2012

I. Officers/Committees:

<u>Officers</u>	<u>2011-2012</u>	<u>2012-2013</u>
President:	Gary Miller	Pamela Lein
Vice President:	Pamela Lein	Anumantha Kanthasamy
Vice President-Elect:	Anumantha Kanthasamy	Aaron Bowman
Secretary/Treasurer:	Timothy Shafer	Jason Richardson
Past President	Stephen Lasley	Gary Miller
Councilors:	Christine Curran	Christine Curran
	Sue Marty	Christopher Toscano
PDA Representative:		Paul Eubig
GSLC Representative:		Josh Allen

Committees: N/A

II. Activities:

The annual officers' meeting was called to order by NTSS incoming President Pamela Lein on March 12, 2012 at the Moscone Convention Center. In attendance were Chris Toscano (Councilor), Paul Eubig (postdoctoral representative), Sue Marty (Councilor), Aaron Bowman (Vice-President Elect), Josh Allen (Graduate Student Representative), Anumantha Kanthasamy (Vice-President), Steve Lasley (Past-President), Tim Shafer (outgoing Secretary/Treasurer), Chris Curran (Councilor), and Jason Richardson (incoming Secretary/Treasurer). Topics of discussion included the poster competition rules of eligibility, the endowment fund status, upcoming CE/program proposals for the 2013 SOT meeting, and mechanisms for increasing membership and visibility of NTSS members.

The reception and business meeting for the Specialty Section was held on March 13, 2012 at the Moscone Convention Center. Approximately 180 people were in attendance. NTSS President Gary Miller called the meeting to order at 6:45 PM. The business agenda included: announcement of the elections results for officers, recognition of outgoing officers, report of the Secretary-Treasurer, report on the status of the NTSS Endowment Fund, announcement of the poster competition awards, solicitation for 2013 continuing education and program proposals, announcements, new business, and discussion of NIH and other extramural funding challenges for neurotoxicology research.

Officer and Business Meeting Minutes: (see Attachment I)

Awards:

The annual NTSS poster competition was chaired by NTSS Past-President Steve Lasley and included 26 posters from 18 graduate students and 8 postdoctoral fellows. Twenty two members of NTSS served as judges for the poster competition. The winners of the poster competition were:

Graduate Students/Mentors

- 1st Place Kristen Ryan/Manisha Patel, Univ. Colorado
- 2nd Place Sandra Losa/Heather Patisaul, NC State Univ.
- 3rd Place Dilshan Harischandra/Anumantha Kanthasamy, Iowa State Univ.

Postdoctoral fellows/Mentors

- 1st Place Huagun Jin/Anumantha Kanthasamy, Iowa State Univ.
- 2nd Place Kirstie Stansfield/Tomas Guilarte, Columbia Univ.
- 3rd Place Lana Shaiba/Hassan El-Fawa, Albany College of Pharmacy and Health

2012 SOT Annual Meeting Courses/Sessions sponsored or co-sponsored by NTSS: (See Attachment II)

The NTSS Meeting Proposal Review Committee for the 2012 meeting was chaired by Gary Miller (President). Steve Lasley (Past President) and Pam Lein (Vice President) served as committee members. The committee received 14 proposals for initial review. Of these, 6 were requests for primary endorsement (1 Workshop, 5 symposia) and 8 requested secondary endorsement. One of the primary endorsement symposium was accepted by the SOT Program Committee, "Emerging Evidence for Novel Noncholinergic Mechanisms of Organophosphate-Induced Neurotoxicity". NTSS also co-sponsored the Symposium "Toxic Cell Death: Signaling Pathways, Cross-Talk, and High-Throughput Analysis" and the Workshop "Nonclinical and Clinical Applications of Translational Organ-based Imaging".

2013 SOT Annual Meeting Proposals:

NTSS-sponsored and endorsed program proposals for the 2013 SOT meeting included 1 CE Basic proposal, 4 Symposium proposals, and 1 Workshop proposal.

Endowment Fund Details: The Neurotoxicology Fellowship Award Fund was officially approved in January 2011. This endowment fund was established to provide continuing support for the specialty section with the proceeds going to the student and postdoctoral awards. The Award will be aligned with NTSS and the selection of award recipients is the responsibility of the executive committee of the NTSS. Bestowing of the awards will occur at the NTSS social event held in conjunction with the SOT Annual Meeting. As of May 31, 2012, the Neurotoxicology Fellowship Award Endowment had net assets of \$6,040. This was based on a beginning asset balance of \$2,961, \$2,835 in current year donations, and a total return on investment of \$244.

Newsletters: (See Attachments III and IV)

Teleseminars: N/A

White Papers: N/A

Contributions to SOT website: The NTSS Councilors, post-doctoral and graduate student representatives are working with SOT staff to redesign the current Web site. New content includes a profile of the 2012 award winners. A private Facebook group has been created as a supplement to ToXchange for recruitment & retention of student/post-doctoral members. The NTSS web page was updated to reflect the new officers, as well as the events from the March 2012 SOT meeting (pictures, award winners, etc).

Other Specialty Section 2011-2012 Activities: N/A

SOT
NEUROTOXICOLOGY SPECIALTY SECTION
Officers' Meeting
March 12, 2012

Present Pam Lein, Chris Toscano, Paul Eubig, Sue Marty, Aaron Bowman, Josh Allen, Anu Kanthasamy, Steve Lasley, Tim Shafer, Chris Curran, Jason Richardson

1) Call to Order

2) Introduction of new Officers

- a) Aaron Bowman- VP Elect
- b) Jason Richardson- Sec/Treas
- c) Paul Eubig- Post-Doc rep
- d) Josh Allen- Student rep

3) Poster Competition presided over by Steve Lasley

26 posters; 18 grad students, 8 post-docs; 1:15 min. Poster scoring sheets to pass out to judges. Paul will be at door to direct students to 600-630 location in Exhibit Hall

a) Rules of Eligibility for participation in poster competition

Chris Curran brought up the question of whether we want to open the competition to undergraduate students. Chris Curran mentioned that SOT is working on a special poster session for undergraduate students, so this may be a moot point. Additional discussion involved approaches for confirming NTSS support for undergraduate research. Ideas discussed included whether we could place NTSS ribbons on appropriate (neurotox-related) undergraduate posters or perhaps have undergraduates put up their posters during the NTSS social.

Post-doc eligibility- Agreed to adopt the SOT classification – if an individual qualifies as a postdoc under the SOT guidelines (e.g., the person is considered a post-doc by SOT) at the time of the Annual meeting, then they are eligible to compete as a postdoc in the NTSS poster competition. There was discussion as to whether an individual that had taken a permanent job, but wanted to present work from their postdoctoral period could compete. It was agreed that the person must be a current post-doc. There was also confirmation of a hard requirement for participants to have current SOT and NTSS membership or to have applied for NTSS membership.

In order to be clear about the requirements, it was proposed that "should" will be changed to "must" in announcement. All are in agreement on this.

b) Facilities provided by SOT for the poster competition

Steve Lasley indicated difficulty in identifying a sufficient number of judges to cover posters in an efficient manner. Time is an issue; HQ will not allow more time. Some of the problems with finding a sufficient number of judges include the facts that the INA

meeting and the SOT SS Officers meeting have traditionally been at the same time as the poster competition. INA officers have indicated that they will be willing to work with us to find a better time.

Suggestion was made that during this year's poster competition we take note of who the other SS having poster competitions at same time so maybe we can coordinate with other SS to approach SOT Council about changing the day, length of time or venue for the poster competition. Jason R will do this.

Another option is to check into setting up another room with poster boards.

4) Endowment Fund Status.

The endowment fund has accumulated around \$4500-5,000 to date. In order for the endowment to become permanent, we have 22 months to reach the goal of \$25,000. There was discussion regarding potential ways to increase the fund, including solicitation of sponsor and University support. There was also discussion about asking members to check with their employers to see if matching funds are available for donations. There was also a suggestion that an email reminder with the form be sent out to the membership periodically. The endowment fund will be discussed further by Gary Miller at the Business Meeting.

5) Budget- Tim Shafer;

The budget for the NTSS is very tight. Primary sources of income come from portion of meeting registration of members and membership dues. This produces cash influx in March and June.

There was discussion regarding the amount left in the budget after expenses from the SOT meeting are paid.

Aaron B and Pam L. proposed some Ideas to increase visibility of NTSS members: ID members on badges; pens, stickers, logo for poster. It was agreed that it would be necessary to check with SOT to see if the NTSS emblem can be placed on posters, since SOT owns the name. Will follow up with council.

6) NTSS Business Meeting Agenda- Gary Miller/Pam Lein

The NTSS will be held Tuesday from 5-7:30 PM at the Marriott Marquis Golden Gate Ballroom B.

7) Discussion of concepts/topics for which we should solicit the NTSS membership for CE and program proposals for the 2013 annual meeting. Ideas all agreed were of relevance and broad interest:

Chris Toscano/Sue Marty- methods for detection of Neurotoxicity/Neuropathology in a regulatory context. Under biomarkers and safety evaluation theme.

Air pollution and neurotox -Rochester proposal on inhalation. This proposal was liked last year, but was deemed to have too many participants from the same institution. Pam will follow-up with Debbie Cory-Slechta about revising the proposal.

Nanomaterials- Robert Tanguay, Kent Pinkerton. Will Boyes, Bob Yokel. Anu and Jason will follow-up with Robert and Will.

Neuroimmune- Jean Harry, Chris Curran has a name to forward to Jean
CE Program- Neuroinflammation- , Stem Cells- Tim and Aaron.

8) NIH Funding Challenges

Gary Miller has been asked by NIEHS program officers to discuss poor success rates of Neurotox grants at NIH study section, particularly NAL.
Is the issue scientific or systemic (how the grants are handled). Peer review is very rigorous. NIH is considering disbanding NAL and putting together Tox study sections

8) Use of Website, vs ToxExchange vs Newsletter- Chris Curran

Chris will update website with new pics- use website as recruitment tool. Need a calendar of when things get updated- Use Toxchange for archival purposes. Solicit images from NTSS member labs for the webpage.

Student and post-doc rep can help update the webpage. Could also do profiles on members/awardees.

Newsletters: Agreement is for a minimum of 2 newsletters per year, with 1 coming after the annual meeting and the other before the next meeting. It is agreed that it is up to the NTSS president to draft newsletters and to work with the secretary/treasurer to get the newsletters out. There was discussion about trying to put together quarterly newsletters, and the general consensus this might be a good approach to keep members aware of NTSS throughout the year.

NTSS Business Meeting Minutes
March 13, 2012

Estimated attendance: 180 people.

- Welcome and opening remarks- Gary Miller.
- Introduction of new officers
 See above
- Recognition of outgoing officers
- Secretary-Treasurer's report- Tim Shafer
 Current Balance: \$8313
 Expected Meeting Expenses: \$7660
 Estimated Meeting Income: TBD
- NTSS Endowment Fund- Gary Miller
 Current status- about \$5000
 Please fill out forms and turn in.
- Poster competition awards- Steve Lasley

 ~22 judges

 Grad Students

 Dilshan Harischandra/Anumantha Kanthasamy IA State- 3rd place.
 Sandra Losa/Heather Patisaul NC state- 2nd place
 Kristen Ryan/Manisha Patel, UColorado- 1st place

Post doc

 Lana Shaiba/Hassan El-Fawa, Albany College of Pharmacy and Health-3rd
 Kirstie Stansfield/Guilarte Columbia University- 2nd place
 Huagun Jin/Anumantha Kanthasamy IA State- 1st Place

- 2012 Continuing education and program proposals- Gary Miller
- Announcements/new business

 Abby Li-SOT CCT Meeting "Building for Better Decisions:
 In RTP at EPA

 Abby Li- elements of a successful workshop/symposium
 Webinar on Thursday March 22 12:00-1:30pm on how to submit a proposal.

 Don Fox- INA meeting next year in The Netherlands

 Tox ShowDown- Marion Ehrich

- Funding Challenges for Neurotoxicology at NIH- Gary Miller.
 Larger discussion after meeting close.

- Closing remarks

Session or Event Date	Start Time	End Time	Session or Event Type	Session or Event Title	Session or Event Location
Monday, March 12	6:00 AM	7:30 PM	Ancillary Event	International Neurotoxicology Association Business Meeting	Pacific Suite H (Marriott Marquis)
	9:15 AM	12:00 PM	Platform Session	Nanotoxicology: Nanogold or Nanosilver	Room 309 (Convention Center)
				Risk Assessment: Case-Specific Characterizations	
	9:30 AM	12:30 PM	Poster Session	Fukushima Radiation Toxicity and Global Toxicology Issues	Exhibit Hall
				Nanotoxicology: Environmental Toxicology, Zebrafish, and Nanoparticles	
				Epidemiology: Assessments and Approaches	
				Developmental Basis of Adult Disease	
Tuesday, March 13	1:00 PM	4:30 PM	Poster Session	Biomarkers of Organ Damage by Drugs and Xenobiotics	Exhibit Hall
				Inflammation in Disease	
				Children's Health and Juvenile Toxicity	
	2:00 PM	4:45 PM	Symposium Session	Toxic Cell Death: Signaling Pathways, Cross-Talk, and High-Throughput Analysis	Room 308 (Convention Center)
Wednesday, March 14	9:00 AM	11:45 AM	Platform Session	Cardiovascular Toxicity of Nanoparticles	Room 310 (Convention Center)
				Disease Prevention and Clinical and Translational Toxicology	
				Neurodegenerative Disease	
				Neurotoxicity: Metals	
	9:00 AM	12:30 PM	Poster Session	Neurotoxicity: General	Exhibit Hall
				Inhalants and Cardiopulmonary: Chemical Agents	
				Pharmaceutical Safety Assessment: Methods and Mechanisms	
				Oxidative Injury	
				'Omics in Toxicology	
				Nanotoxicology: Nanoparticles II	
Thursday, March 15				Chemical and Biological Weapons: Agents and Countermeasures	
				Nanotoxicology: Nanoparticles III	
	1:00 PM	4:30 PM	Poster Session	Pesticide: Toxicology	Exhibit Hall
				Pesticides: Exposure and Hazard Assessment	
				Exposure Characterization: New Analytical Sampling Methods, Biomonitoring, and Assessment Applications	
				Cardiovascular Toxicity II	
				Biotransformation/Cytochrome P450	
	1:30 PM	4:15 PM	Workshop Session	Nonclinical and Clinical Applications of Translational Organ-based Imaging	Room 104 (Convention Center)
	1:30 PM	4:15 PM	Platform Session	Advances in Developmental Neurotoxicity: Stem Cell, High-Throughput, and Alternative Species Approaches	Room 302 (Convention Center)
				Risk Assessment Approaches: Data-Derived Extrapolations, QSAR, <i>In Silico</i> Strategies, and Surrogates	Room 310 (Convention Center)
	6:00 PM	7:30 PM	Reception	NTSS reception	Golden Gate Ballroom B



Neurotoxicology Specialty Section

December 12, 2011

NTSS Members:

It is hard to believe that 2011 is almost over. The 50th Annual meeting is behind us. It was a great success for the specialty section. We supported several outstanding symposium sessions, the trainee poster session was impressive, and the Monday night business meeting/social was very well attended. Congratulations to the following trainees who received awards for their poster presentations:

Predoctoral Student Poster Awards

1st place: Hariharan Saminathan- Fyn Kinase Activation Contributes to MPTP-Induced Dopaminergic Neurotoxicity: Relevance to the Pathogenesis of Parkinson's Disease (advisor, Anu Kanthasamy)
2nd place: Sarah Latchney - Deletion or Activation of the AHR by Dioxin Impairs Hippocampal Neurogenesis and Contextual Fear Memory in Adult Mice (advisor, Lisa Opanashuk)
3rd place: Delfina Romero - Utility of C6-Glioma Cells for Exploratory Risk Assessment of Mixtures of Insecticides (advisor, Marcello Wolanski)

Postdoctoral Poster Award

1st Place Judy Choi- Translocator Protein 18 kDa (TSPO): A Pre-Clinical Biomarker of Neurodegeneration in Sandhoff Disease Mice (advisor, Tomas Guilarte)

One item we would like to discuss at the [2012 business meeting/social](#) is symposia proposals for the annual meeting. We had one primary sponsored symposium accepted for the 2012 meeting. We believe that reasons why more of our primary sponsored proposals were not selected for the upcoming meeting include: (1) symposia based on many of our top ideas were selected for the 2011 meeting; (2) our proposals need to improve recruitment of outstanding speakers from outside SOT; (3) it is critical to not have one or at most two proposed speakers from the same institute; and (4) as a specialty section, we need to minimize repetition of similar content from year-to-year. Dr. Leigh Ann Burns-Nass recently prepared an excellent set of guidelines for submitting symposium proposals, which we strongly encourage any group planning to submit a symposia proposal to follow. We are willing to send these guidelines to any group considering submitting a proposal for next year's meeting. Let's start thinking now about innovative and cutting-edge ideas that would be of interest to our specialty section members and the society as a whole. For the 50th Annual Meeting we were strategic in our proposal preparation with several groups working towards preparing proposals with cutting-edge science and topics of widespread interest (and consistent with the SOT themes for that year). We may want to consider a similar strategy for the 52nd Annual Meeting in 2013.

Another topic of interest to our members is the increased difficulty of getting neurotoxicology research funded through NIH. Neurotoxicology proposals have not been performing well at study section and this has the potential to weaken the overall standing of the field. We thought that we might spend 10-15 min discussing this topic at the meeting, but then have individuals interested in further discussion stay afterwards to participate in a more in-depth discussion and strategic planning.

If you have additional suggestions of issues to be discussed at the NTSS annual meeting and/or have a specific agenda item for the meeting, please email me and/or Tim Shafer directly.

NTSS Postdoc/Grad Student Poster Awards. Current **graduate students or postdoctoral research fellows/associates** planning to attend the 2012 Annual Meeting are eligible to compete for poster awards.

Submission requirements include a copy of the candidate's SOT submitted abstract (1 page) and a letter of support from the graduate student's advisor or postdoctoral mentor outlining the independence and role of the candidate in the research. Submit abstract and letter of support to **Steve Lasley**, Chair of the NTSS Student/Postdoctoral Awards Committee. Graduate students or postdocs giving platform presentations at the Annual Meeting are also eligible if they prepare a poster summarizing their talk. **Abstract submission deadline: January 31, 2012.** Participants will also be required to send an electronic copy (PDF) of their **poster** to **Dr. Lasley** by **February 28, 2012** to facilitate the judging (this presubmission of the poster need not be the final version presented at the 2011 Annual Meeting). Graduate students and postdocs should be members of NTSS or show evidence of application for membership. Advisors or mentors who are not members are strongly encouraged to join NTSS. In addition to recognition plaques for each winner, monetary prizes will be awarded, such as \$500, \$300 and \$150 for first, second and third place. Winners will be announced at the annual NTSS Business Meeting in San Francisco, CA. Contact: **Steve Lasley (SML@uic.edu)**.

In closing, I want to remind members of the NTSS Endowment Fund. We are near the end of our first year. One of our goals was to get as many members as possible to contribute \$50 or more in 2011, 2012, and 2013. Please consider contributing to this important fund. To remind members, the proceeds from the endowment would be used to fund the awards we provide to graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. The donor form can be found at <http://www.toxicology.org/ai/csot/contribute.asp>. Be sure to select Neurotoxicology Fellowship Award under named funds.

See you in San Francisco!



Gary W. Miller Ph.D.
President, NTSS



Neurotoxicology Specialty Section

March 5, 2012

Dear NTSS Members:

The **Society of Toxicology** annual meeting begins in less than a week, and we hope that you will be attending the meeting. This newsletter includes information you will find useful as you plan for the meeting. In addition, you will find at the end of this newsletter a [**Table of Neurotoxicology-Related Sessions and Events**](#) occurring during the meeting, which was assembled by NTSS student member Marianna Stamou.

NTSS/SOT Election Results: In the recent NTSS elections **Aaron Bowman** was elected to the position of Vice-President-Elect; **Jason Richardson** was elected to the position of Secretary/Treasurer. **Paul Eubig** was elected to be the postdoctoral representative; **Josh Allen**, the student representative. NTSS membership also voted overwhelmingly to support the proposed revisions to the NTSS by-laws, which will now go to SOT Council for final approval. Congratulations also to NTSS member Mary Gilbert, who was elected by the general SOT membership as a member of the SOT Awards Committee (2012-2014).

Poster Competition: For those of you who have graduate students or postdocs participating in the poster contest (or who are serving as judges for the contest), the judging will take place from **4:45-6:00 pm on Monday March 12** in the Moscone Convention Center Exhibit Hall. Candidates and judges have received specific information and should enter the Tox Expo through the main entrance and proceed to the far right to the poster board 600 locations. **Steve Lasley** is coordinating the contest this year, so please contact him directly if you have any questions prior to the meeting (sml@uic.edu). Good luck to all students and postdocs who are participating, and a special thanks to all who have agreed to help with the judging! Prizes will be awarded at the **NTSS Reception**.

NTSS Reception: This year our specialty section reception will be held **Tuesday, March 13 from 6-7:30 pm** in **Golden Gate Ballroom B of the Marriott Marquis Hotel**, which is within walking distance of the convention center. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend to enjoy the food and drink and visit with your NTSS colleagues. A short business meeting will be held at approximately 6:45 PM. An agenda outline is provided below. Please contact **Gary Miller (gary.miller@emory.edu)** if you would like to make an announcement at the business meeting.

NTSS Business Meeting Agenda

- Welcome and opening remarks
- Introduction of new officers
- Recognition of outgoing officers
- Secretary-Treasurer's report
- NTSS Endowment Fund
- Poster competition awards
- 2012 Continuing education and program proposals
- Announcements/new business
- Funding Challenges for Neurotoxicology at NIH
- Closing remarks

NTSS Endowment Fund: The **Neurotoxicology Fellowship Award Fund** was initiated at last year's Annual meeting ("\$50 for 50 Years"). We hope to reach the 2/3 mark at this year's Annual meeting (we have 3 years to reach the minimum of \$25,000 required by SOT to establish an endowment). Donation forms and information will be provided at the NTSS Reception, and Gary Miller will make a short presentation with more details. An NTSS endowment fund logo is needed for signage, stationery, etc. We will either have to re-size the logo at the top of the previous page for signage, or design a new logo. Members interested in helping design a new endowment fund logo should contact **Gary Miller** (gary.miller@emory.edu).

CE and Program Proposals for 2012: As we prepare for the 2012 meeting, the NTSS Executive Committee invites you to submit proposals for the 2013 annual meeting for NTSS sponsorship and endorsement. We recommend that those interested in submitting proposals speak to current NTSS officers at the Annual Meeting to further develop your idea. An NTSS pre-review committee (consisting of Gary Miller, outgoing NTSS president, Pam Lein, incoming NTSS president and Anu Kanthasamy, incoming NTSS vice-president) will review all proposals emailed to Pam Lein (plein@ucdavis.edu) by **April 15** and offer suggestions for strengthening the proposal prior to submission to the SOT Program Committee. **Themes for the 2013 meeting** are listed below:

Scientific Program Themes

- Application of Systems Biology to Toxicology
- Biomarkers for Exposure Assessment, Safety Evaluation, and Translational Medicine
- Effects of Nanomaterials on Biological Systems
- Molecular Basis of Genetic Variability and Susceptibility to Toxicants
- Regulatory Science: Advancing New Approaches for Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment
- Detailed information can be found at https://www.toxicology.org/ms/SciSess_proposal.asp

CE Target Areas

- Developmental Origins of Health and Disease (DOHaD)
- Molecular Imaging
- Personalized Toxicology

Tips for Submitting More Competitive Session Proposals

- Review the requirements on the SOT web site [SOT Web site](#) before developing the proposal
- Submit well-developed proposals aligned with the theme and proposed session. Include details to provide clarity of the topic and the content
- Include a diverse array of speakers from different institutes
- Minimize non-member speakers to subject experts
- Contact sponsors and endorsers (Special Interest Groups, Specialty Sections etc) by April (or earlier) to request sponsorship/endorsement, and help with the proposal(s) development.

The SPC has scheduled a webinar to discuss best practices for developing and submitting a proposal on March 22, 2012, from 12:00 noon to 2:00 pm. The details for connecting to the session can be found on the [SOT website](#), and you are encouraged to participate in this session if have any questions or concerns about how to submit a high quality proposal.

Additional tips for submitting competitive session proposals are attached.

Thanks! Hopefully our paths cross in San Francisco!



NTSS Vice-President

Submitting More Competitive Session Proposals

By **Leigh Ann Burns Naas**, Pfizer Global Research and Development

So you're thinking about submitting a program proposal for the 2012 Annual Meeting in San Francisco, but you're unsure about getting it accepted by the Scientific Program Committee (SPC). Each year, the review process is becoming more competitive as more and more program proposals are received, yet the number of proposals that can be accepted continues to remain somewhat similar due to the availability of rooms at the venue for the SOT Annual Meeting, which can be determined up to 5 years in advance. So how do you make your proposal more competitive? Start with the [SOT Web site](#) that tells you about the types of proposals, how many speakers in each, the duration, and the focus of each type of session. Pick the right one for your topic. And look at the bottom of the page to see examples of some high quality proposals that have been submitted. Additional information can be found at the [SOT Forms and Applications page](#). Now for a few specifics:

1. *Proposal Quality:* Proposals submitted with general topics for speakers, no proposed speakers, no description of what each speaker will cover, and/or 1–3 general sentences about the topic for the proposal (or speaker) generally don't fare well. There are two primary reasons for this. First, the SPC gets many well-developed proposals that clearly state the importance/relevance of the topic, the relevance of the speakers to the topics, and how the speaker talks fit into the overall proposal as well as how they complement each other. The second reason likely has to do with how the proposals are reviewed.

Typically, each member of the SPC is given all proposals to review and they do this over about a 2-week period on their own time, and provide an overall score for each proposal (1 thru 5 where 1 is best and 5 is lowest). These scores are sent to SOT executive staff where they are combined and averaged with scores from each SPC member, generating a composite score for each proposal (SPC members do not know how other SPC members scored a proposal). Proposals with a composite score lower than a median and determined cut-off based on the composite scores for that year are typically not considered further unless an SPC member feels strongly that the composite score is unjustified. It can happen, but it isn't common. *A key point then is that your proposal should stand out to each SPC member so that they can independently determine the significance of the topic, the relationship of each talk to the topic, and the inter-relationship of the talks to one another.* Remember that the SPC is selected with an effort to have a broad expertise across toxicology specialties and to be equally representative of job sectors (e.g., industry, academia, government, etc.) and gender. So don't assume that everyone will "get it," but do the best you can to help everyone understand regardless of their background and expertise.

2. *Breadth of Topic and Speakers:* The SPC is charged with developing the best program with the broadest appeal to all members of the SOT. You've no doubt seen that focus may shift from year to year, and this is more typically driven by the proposals submitted. SPC generally does not select what were considered lesser proposals simply to have more of a specific sector or topic represented at the Annual Meeting. The primary focus is on the highest quality science and proposals. *That said, one thing that SPC sees sometimes are proposals that may be good topics, but most (or sometimes all) speakers are from a specific institution. This doesn't allow for much in the way of diverse opinion to be presented. Also, when most of the speakers are from a specific institution or all the speakers presentations (regardless of institution) are on a single topic (e.g., an assay), then the proposal begins to read like an 'infomercial,' which is specifically undesirable.* Make sure the scope of your topic isn't too narrow or too broad. If the topic is only of interest to a small proportion of the membership or if it is so broad as to be a 'survey of the literature,' for example, it may not be viewed as favorably.
3. *Minimize Non-Member Speakers Where Possible:* One question that often arises is the participation of non-members in SOT sessions. Absolutely you can have non-members participate, especially if

they are the best presenters for that specific talk. But unless the topic of the session is really novel to toxicology, it is better to have no more than 1-2 non-member speakers. One consideration is that SOT will only cover some travel support for a defined number of speakers. SOT members participate at their own expense. Non-members receive complimentary registration, and SOT will provide limited travel support for 1-2 non-members for symposia, workshops, and regional interest sessions, and 1 non-member for roundtables, informational sessions, historical highlights, and educational-career development sessions. If your session topic is really novel or toxicology is beginning to move into a novel field where most of the key players are not necessarily toxicologists, you can apply for Innovations in Toxicological Sciences (ITS) or Innovations in Applied Toxicology (IAT) designation. A short single-page rationale is needed to justify this category designation. If accepted, more than 1-2 non-members can get travel support. But remember: the proposal must be accepted by the SPC before the designation can be considered.

4. *Sponsorships and Endorsements:* Your Sponsor is the Specialty Section (SS), Special Interest Group (SIG), etc. which is the primary group supporting the proposal. Your Endorsers are the other groups who think your proposal is important and will add their support (endorsement) to having it presented. Sponsors have a key role in helping the SPC with their review and selection of proposals. After the submission site closes at the end of April, each Sponsor goes into a dedicated site and ranks the proposals they have been asked to Sponsor. They rank each proposal category (Symposium, Workshop, Roundtable, etc.) 1-x which tells the SPC that #1 is their top proposal in a specific category. SPC is considering a change whereby Sponsors rank proposals regardless of category but as of the writing of this article, this hasn't happened.

Don't surprise Sponsors and Endorsers. Ask them early for their support (like, within the first 2 weeks of April or earlier!), providing your proposal and a rationale why you think their SS, SIG, etc. would be interested in Sponsoring or Endorsing the proposal. Particular to Endorsers, each group may have different reasons for being interested so think about this and make it personal to each group you ask. One thing you have no control over is where a Sponsor ranks you relative to other proposals they have been asked to sponsor—some Sponsors have been asked to Sponsor over 50 proposals in a single year and so have to review and rank each one themselves. All you can do is focus on quality and assuring that they understand the significance of your proposal to both SOT and their members in particular. While you should contact them early, don't worry too much if the Sponsor you are seeking doesn't get back to you immediately. Each group has a different process (including timing) they use for making these determinations, some not even beginning the process until May 1. Others, though, are increasingly asking for proposals to be submitted early so they have a chance to review and provide input for improvement prior to the closure of the submission site and the submission of the final rankings.

Finally, Sponsors are asked to add specific comments to each of the proposals they are Sponsoring. Endorsers are not required to enter comments, but often they do. All of these comments are very important to SPC. Sometimes a Sponsor provides comments that are seemingly neutral about the proposal, or they provide critical evaluation that suggests the proposal is not very strong. Each SPC member has all comments on all proposals when they are reviewing the proposals and these comments are taken seriously. If you hear from SPC that your proposal did not have adequate support from the Sponsor, you can bet the comments (or lack thereof) from the Sponsor were a factor in that decision.

Understand that taking some of these tips into account won't guarantee acceptance of your proposal. There will always be the unforeseen and intangibles. For example, sometimes the SPC receives multiple competitive proposals for the same or a similar topic and then it becomes a selection between those proposals. In addition, if the topic was presented the previous year, it is less likely to be competitive. However, embracing these tips can improve your chances. The submission site will be open soon (before the Annual Meeting!) so there's no time like the present to get started!

Session or Event Date	Start Time	End Time	Session or Event Type	Session or Event Title	Session or Event Location
Monday, March 12	6:00 AM	7:30 PM	Ancillary Event	International Neurotoxicology Association Business Meeting	Pacific Suite H (Marriott Marquis)
	9:15 AM	12:00 PM	Platform Session	Nanotoxicology: Nanogold or Nanosilver	Room 309 (Convention Center)
				Risk Assessment: Case-Specific Characterizations	
	9:30 AM	12:30 PM	Poster Session	Fukushima Radiation Toxicity and Global Toxicology Issues	Exhibit Hall
				Nanotoxicology: Environmental Toxicology, Zebrafish, and Nanoparticles	
				Epidemiology: Assessments and Approaches	
				Developmental Basis of Adult Disease	
Tuesday, March 13	1:00 PM	4:30 PM	Poster Session	Biomarkers of Organ Damage by Drugs and Xenobiotics	Exhibit Hall
				Inflammation in Disease	
				Children's Health and Juvenile Toxicity	
	2:00 PM	4:45 PM	Symposium Session	Toxic Cell Death: Signaling Pathways, Cross-Talk, and High-Throughput Analysis	Room 308 (Convention Center)
Wednesday, March 14	9:00 AM	11:45 AM	Platform Session	Cardiovascular Toxicity of Nanoparticles	Room 310 (Convention Center)
				Disease Prevention and Clinical and Translational Toxicology	
				Neurodegenerative Disease	
				Neurotoxicity: Metals	
	9:00 AM	12:30 PM	Poster Session	Neurotoxicity: General	Exhibit Hall
				Inhalants and Cardiopulmonary: Chemical Agents	
				Pharmaceutical Safety Assessment: Methods and Mechanisms	
				Oxidative Injury	
				'Omics in Toxicology	
				Nanotoxicology: Nanoparticles II	
Thursday, March 15				Chemical and Biological Weapons: Agents and Countermeasures	
				Nanotoxicology: Nanoparticles III	
	1:00 PM	4:30 PM	Poster Session	Pesticide: Toxicology	Exhibit Hall
				Pesticides: Exposure and Hazard Assessment	
				Exposure Characterization: New Analytical Sampling Methods, Biomonitoring, and Assessment Applications	
				Cardiovascular Toxicity II	
				Biotransformation/Cytochrome P450	
Wednesday, March 14	1:30 PM	4:15 PM	Workshop Session	Nonclinical and Clinical Applications of Translational Organ-based Imaging	Room 104 (Convention Center)
	1:30 PM	4:15 PM	Platform Session	Advances in Developmental Neurotoxicity: Stem Cell, High-Throughput, and Alternative Species Approaches	Room 302 (Convention Center)
				Risk Assessment Approaches: Data-Derived Extrapolations, QSAR, <i>In Silico</i> Strategies, and Surrogates	Room 310 (Convention Center)
Wednesday, March 14	6:00 PM	7:30 PM	Reception	NTSS reception	Golden Gate Ballroom B
Thursday, March 15				Disposition and Pharmacokinetics	
				Developmental Toxicity II	
	9:00 AM	12:30 PM	Poster Session	Developmental Neurotoxicity I	Exhibit Hall
				Cell Death Pathways	
				Exposure Assessment: Case-Specific Characterizations	
Thursday, March 15				Pharmaceutical Safety Assessment: Novel Therapeutics and Preclinical Safety Assessment	
				Animal Models in Pharmaceutical Toxicology	
	1:00 PM	4:30 PM	Poster Session	Metals	Exhibit Hall
Thursday, March 15				Persistent Organic Chemicals	
				Neurotoxicity: Pesticides	
	8:30 AM	12:00 PM	Late-Breaking Poster Session	Late-Breaking Poster Session 2	Gateway Ballroom (Convention Center)
Thursday, March 15				Late-Breaking Poster Session 3	
				Late-Breaking Poster Session 4	
Thursday, March 15	9:00 AM	11:45 AM	Symposium Session	Emerging Evidence for Novel Noncholinergic Mechanisms of Organophosphate-Induced Neurotoxicity	Room 102 (Convention Center)