J U S T  A  M I N U T E . . .

...Susanne Lundin, professor of Ethnology and Bagadilico co-worker, recently back from a trip to Israel to study organ trafficking. There, she ended up in the middle of the storm following the article in Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet, in which the Israeli army is accused of killing young Palestinians and stealing their organs.

Badly chosen time?
– I thought, “This is the worst possible timing”. But it wasn’t. It gave people a reason to discuss with me. The only one to cancel their meeting with me was the Swedish embassy, which says a lot. The trip actually became more successful because of the conflict. I hardly dared to say that I was from Sweden, but once I said it, the discussion became interesting.

Is organ trafficking common in Israel?
– It’s not that uncommon. Until 2008, Israel had legislation on legal organ trade – you could buy yourself off the waiting list. This made it possible for illegal organ brokers to advertise in the press. The people wanting to sell their organs were then often kidnapped and robbed of their organs without getting any money or medical care.

You have interviewed many victims of organ trafficking. How do you go about finding them?
– It’s complicated and it’s all about connections. One problem is that sometimes they don’t want to talk, because they are ashamed, or don’t know their rights because they aren’t educated.

Sounds awful.
– Yes, but on the other hand, Israel is one of the few countries that has actually convicted organ brokers, because it has been possible to find them.

Susanne Lundin studies the cultural implications of new reproductive technologies, gene therapy, stem cell research, transplantations, and the use of transgenic animals – among other things. Did you miss this diplomatic fight? Read about it by clicking here.

N E W S  I N  B R I E F

Andreas found de novo mutation in Swedish family

In a new paper, Ph.D. student Andreas Puschmann shows that a known, but rare, mutation in the alpha-synuclein gene occurred all over again in a Swedish family.

The A53T mutation in the alpha-synuclein gene was the very first mutation to be described in association with Parkinson’s disease (1997). Until now, this mutation has only been found in few persons, mostly of Greek or Italian origin. In their new paper, Andreas Puschmann et al. show that the mutation occurred de novo in a family in southern Sweden, only one generation back in time, and that it is this point mutation that leads to the disease.

Of the investigated members of the family, two have the disease and have been followed clinically during a decade. Age of onset is low (in this case 31 and 40 years) and the disease process affected not only the dopamine system but the entire brain.

Those of you who are going to the Neurofortis / Bagadilico retreat will have the opportunity to listen to Andreas Puschmann’s talk.

You can also download the entire article by clicking here.

11 million euro to MultiPark!

It is now final: MultiPark will be granted 110 million kronor (approximately 11 million euro) over five years.

MultiPark is a translational programme that ranges from pre-clinical research to studies on the life situation of patients with Parkinson’s disease, and shares several of its Principal Investigators with Bagadilico. It includes funding for positions and start-up packages for young scientists as well as core facility technical platforms.

Based on this, the University has appointed Professor Patrik Brundin coordinator for the strategic research area neuroscience, including diseases of the brain and nervous system. Patrik Brundin will be coordinator 10 September 2009 – 30 September 2012.

Bagadilico members are Wanted!

A review on Huntington’s disease by Bagadilico members published in The Lancet Neurology was among the journal’s ten most wanted articles this summer.

The authors have concentrated on the peripheral pathology of Huntington’s disease, that is, what goes on in the different organs of the body, rather than in the brain where the disease arises – a relatively new way of looking at the disease.

Read the abstract by clicking here.

Åsa Petersén wins position in psychiatry

Åsa Petersén has won one of the six positions as senior clinical researcher in psychiatry advertised by the Swedish Research Council.

The prestigious position is for three years with a possible extension for three more years, and includes a start-up package of one million Swedish kronor (around 100 000 euro) during the first year.

Congratulations!

Bagadilico arranges “Parkinson café”

Our first Parkinson café will be held Monday 12th October, 3 pm. The event is an opportunity for patients and their families to meet with and talk directly to scientists. If the event is well received, we will make it a recurring one with different themes each time.

The first ones to host this event are Professor Håkan Widner and Professor Anders Björklund, who will inform about clinical studies on a new drug against involuntary movements.

If you wish to speak to patients or answer questions at a future Parkinson café, e-mail me: christel.thunell@med.lu.se.
“Science is like cooking”

Oktar Guloglu is not only a Ph.D. student at the Neuronal Survival Unit, he is also the man with his own cooking show – on the world wide web.

Before the summer, NESU co-workers got used to his delicious dishes always being on the lunch table. That was when this Turkish delight was in a very intense phase of cooking, filming and uploading his videos to his website The Cook with an Accent (http://cookwithanaccent.com).

The videos on the website (undertitled “Sharing The Secrets Behind His Lovely Belly”) are also available as iTunes video podcasts. In August, Oktar’s podcasts were number 22 on iTunes’ top videos for cooking.

– I love eating.
– I really like eating, Oktar clarifies.
– And I can’t find the food I want here. So, what to do? I cook myself. It also prevents me from being homesick. And then I thought, why not share it with others? There is not a single reason not to.

The whole show is produced in his 34 square meter, one room apartment on Östra Torn, using lots of pots, pans and knives plus a small digital camera on a tripod. The videos are filmed over his shoulder, or with the camera pointed at his lovely belly, cutting his head out of the picture.

– I wanted to be mysterious, but I got so many complaints that people could not see my face, so I might reconsider this, says Oktar.

His dishes are Turkish classical dishes like stuffed vine leaves and baklava, although they are renamed funny things like Super Bowl, Liposuction, Hot Bride, Punch in da Face and Popeye’s dream (guess what the last one contains?).

Oktar’s Ph.D. project is about optimising cell sorting in order to purify cultures of dopaminergic cells before transplantation. Something that is not as different from cooking as you may think.

– I always thought that science is like cooking. You have a protocol or recipe, you mix things together, do experiments. You know what the outcome is supposed to be, but you can’t be sure until the cake is baked and comes out of the oven. Because there is always other factors. Like what brands you choose, just like in science you have your favourite antibodies that you know will always work. Or the love you put into it.

Is love important in science as well?
– Yes, of course. If I didn’t love my job I wouldn’t be doing it.

Want to be this newsletter’s Employee of the Month? Tell me what makes you (or your colleague) so special. E-mail me: christel.thunell@med.lu.se.