

Board Walk – January 2020

Cephalalgia
2020, Vol. 40(1) 127–128
© International Headache Society 2020
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/0333102419893552
journals.sagepub.com/home/cep



From mechanisms to treatment



I received didactic training in the field of headache as an undergraduate in Medicine at the Sapienza University of Rome. At that time, I attended the lab of clinical neurophysiology under the supervision of Professor Francesco Pierelli and remained updated with the available literature on the neurophysiological aspects of migraine. From then, I developed an increasing interest in the field, and accepted a fellowship position at the Headache Clinic, Belgium, directed by Professor Jean Schoenen. My research focus was on

cortical and subcortical neuronal oscillatory activity in individuals with migraine, particularly the emerging role of the thalamus in the pathophysiology of migraine. Subsequently, I received a faculty position at the Sapienza University in Latina, close to Rome, where I have continued to conduct research on the mechanisms of habituation and sensitization, and dysfunction in migraine, in terms of both neuromodulation and genetic factors, and their modifications during the migraine cycle. Advancements in high field magnetic resonance imaging have enabled me to examine the micro and macro structure, and functional connectivity of the brain in individuals with migraine. Moreover, new pathophysiological acquisitions and commercialization of new, targeted biological drugs may allow the development of more effective treatment plans for the management of migraine.

My interest in the pathophysiology of headache led to membership of the International Headache Society; in 2007, I started as a junior committee member and am currently serving as trustee. I strongly support the goals of the organization to advance knowledge in the field of headache and disseminate this information worldwide. I am honoured to work with the world's leading headache specialists and share responsibility for the collection of correct information and improvement of the patient's quality of life, which are the fundamental aims of any scientific and clinical process.

Gianluca Coppola

*Sapienza University of Rome Polo Pontino, Department
of Medico-Surgical Sciences and Biotechnologies,
Latina, Italy.*

Email: gianluca.coppola@uniroma1.it

Driving the agenda to prioritise headache research and patient care



I currently work as Professor of Neurology at the University of Birmingham, UK, where I combine clinical and academic roles. I graduated from the University of Birmingham School of Medicine, UK, in 2000 with honours and attained my Membership of the Royal College of Physicians in 2003. I completed my PhD in 2010, funded by a Medical Research Council Clinical Research Training Fellowship, and subsequently worked as a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Clinical Lecturer in Neurology. In 2013, I was awarded an NIHR-funded Clinician Scientist Fellowship, which established an independent program of translational research into headache and idiopathic intracranial hypertension. My research program now continues through the Sir Jules Thorn Award for Biomedical Research.

I run the Metabolic Neurology research group at the Institute of Metabolism and Systems Research, University of Birmingham. My research group seeks to establish and exploit the pathophysiological mechanisms underpinning the debilitating effects of metabolism on headache and raised intracranial pressure, develop therapeutic strategies, and generate real impact while

improving patient care. I am Chief Investigator on a program of investigator-led clinical trials (phase 2 and 3) enabling forward (novel therapeutic molecules are under assessment in patients) and back translation (biomarker evaluation in the laboratory setting). We are also looking with NASA at how we can take our research beyond earth to treat spaceflight-associated raised intracranial pressure.

As a practising neurologist, I run the multidisciplinary clinical Headache Centre and the Idiopathic Intracranial Hypertension service at University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust, UK.

I have a strong ethos of mentorship and training for the next generation of translational clinical researchers and run the regional academic neurology training program as well as continuing to undertake university teaching and mentorship.

I work closely with the patient organisations and am the Patron for the charity Idiopathic Intracranial Hypertension UK (IIHUK). Together, we performed a patient priority-setting exercise to identify the top 10 research priorities in idiopathic intracranial hypertension (IIH). This has helped to drive the research agenda in this often-overlooked condition, where chronic headache is the principal morbidity. I also led work on the first international IIH Guidelines (JNNP – *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Psychiatry*; 2018), which are benefitting patient care through standardising the clinical approach to management.

In the UK, I am on the research committee for the Association for British Neurologists (ABN) and the Deputy Chair for the headache and pain grouping. I help drive national training and education through my membership of the British Association for the Study of Headache (BASH) council. Internationally, I strive to promote excellence in research and education through my roles on the scientific committee for the North American Neuro-Ophthalmology Society (NANOS) and my member of the European Headache Federation Board.

The next decade will be one of the most productive and expanding periods for the headache community. I would like to use my leadership, dynamism and originality of thought to capitalise on this exciting period and augment growth and vision through my role on the International Headache Society Board.

Alex Sinclair

Institute of Metabolism and Systems Research, College of Medical and Dental Sciences, University of Birmingham, UK.

Department of Neurology, University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham, UK.

Email: a.b.sinclair@bham.ac.uk

Twitter: @IIHDrBirmingham