

# Conference medal winners reveal all

Research stars of the future received Conference awards at a special ceremony. **Olivia Timbs** reports

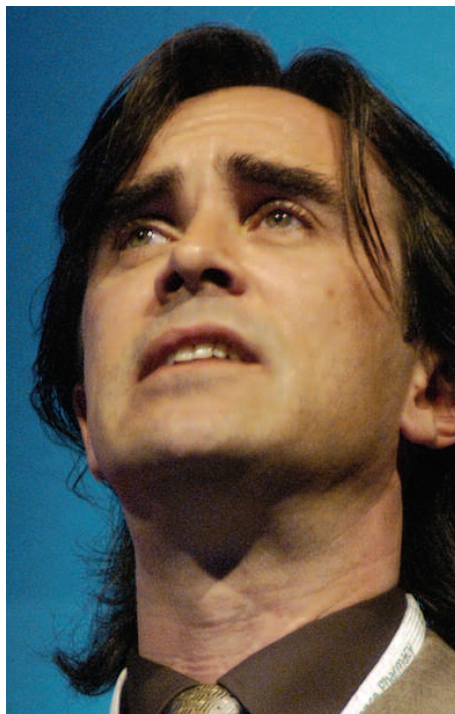
**A**s Duncan Craig, BPC science chairman remarked — just before the presentation of the Conference Science Medal and the *Chemist & Druggist* Practice Research Medal — these awards, which are given to researchers under the ages of 35 and 45, respectively, are a celebration of the research stars of the future.

The recipient of the science medal, Alastair Florence, of the University of Strathclyde, spoke about his research into solid dosage forms: “A crystal clear approach to physical pharmacy.”

He pointed out that nearly 60 per cent of drugs are delivered in solid forms. What remains a challenge for researchers is being able to predict the bioavailability and stability of medicines in these forms. It is known that these features are linked to the crystalline structure of the constituents but, depending on the conditions prevailing, such as temperature and humidity, different polymorphs will be created.

Dr Florence is working with a consortium — called Control and Prediction of the Organic Solid State — led from the department of chemistry at University College London. Together they are working to understand and control polymorphism and therefore improve the stability and predictability of crystalline solids. And, if they are successful, this will lead to the commercial exploitation of crystalline solids.

He cited two examples of the work done to date. First, there was research into hydrochlorothiazide, with two polymorphs: he has investigated what conditions lead to different polymorph formation. Secondly, there was research into zopiclone, which has three polymorphic forms. One, the orthorhombic anhydrous form, is far more stable than the other two since they are vulnerable to humidity, and would, therefore, be the preferred form. Dr Florence remarked how this work helps to explain why materials behave in different ways.



Joe Miles

**Dr Florence discussing his work on the physical characteristics of the constituents of solid dosage forms**

The second medal winner, Bryony Dean Franklin, of Hammersmith Hospital NHS Trust and visiting professor at the School of Pharmacy, University of London, was introduced by Christine Bond, of the University of Aberdeen.

Professor Dean Franklin spoke on the subject of “Medication errors — developing methodologies and evaluating solutions”. Her concerns were to determine how errors occur and why, as well as evaluate interventions to reduce them. She also raised the question of whether or not new technologies will help or hinder in error reduction.

She pointed out that although the gold standard in determining administration errors



Joe Miles

**Professor Dean Franklin speaking on her research into how medication errors occur and how they can be reduced**

is observation, there is no equivalent for prescribing errors. One method alone is not enough to pick up all errors, and a combination of methods is needed, including the retrospective review of medical notes and incident reports, among others.

Professor Dean Franklin described the use of the automated system in Hammersmith Hospital — ServeRx — as a way of reducing errors, in particular errors associated with the prescribing and administration of high-risk drugs. ServeRx is a closed-loop electronic prescribing, automated dispensing, bar-coded administration system and, as she pointed out, is a good example of where science is linked with practice.

## Savings of up to 30 per cent on fees for BPC 2006

Savings of up to 30 per cent are available for a limited period on the fees for next year's British Pharmaceutical Conference, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society has announced.

The “super early bird” offer closes on 31 December. Until then, the full three-day conference fee for members of the Society and for presenters will be £470 plus VAT. The standard fee will be £595 plus VAT and the reduced fee for bona fide students will be £120 + VAT.

The one-day fees are also reduced — to £160 plus VAT for members and presenters, £200 plus VAT for standard rate and £45 plus VAT for students.

The announcement does not say what the fees will rise to after 31 December.

The chairman of the Society's Conference Committee, Council member Colin Ranshaw, said: “BPC 2006 will provide a platform for leading edge thinking and exciting new developments that are shaping the future of both science and practice. The message for

delegates wanting to make big savings on the registration fee for 2006 is, book early.”

Early-bird bookings can be made through the conference website, [www.bpc2006.org](http://www.bpc2006.org), which also sets out conference highlights and discusses the conference theme, “Personalised medicines in health care”.

Booking forms and information can also be obtained from Angela Lyons, Health Links, Windsor House, 11a High Street, Kings Heath, Birmingham B14 7BB (tel 0121 248 3399; fax 0121 248 3390).