

## **Introduction to Vestibular Influences on Movement Satellite Meeting**

**Rosario Resort, Orcas Island  
September 22–26, 2002**

Scientific inquiry moves forward when hypotheses are proposed and then tested. Usually, this process occurs as data are published in scientific journals and exposed to critical evaluation. Readers may have concerns that are not addressed in a publication or at traditional meetings, whose formats leave little time for serious discussion. Furthermore, some concerns, especially those involving data processing or the resulting models, may be obvious to only the small group of scientists doing similar experiments. Usually, the interested but more naïve reader will be unable to either identify or appreciate the controversies in a field or to evaluate the significance of differences in opinion. Controversies are often made more salient if the opposing views are aired in a debate format. It is even better when not only the principal protagonists argue their differing views but when members of the community can ask clarifying questions and/or present their own data that bear on the issue. Often this “town hall” format identifies crucial data or experiments that would allow the scientific community to decide which view is most consistent with existing data or alternatively, whether the question is ill posed and cannot even be solved with existing concepts or techniques. A debate or open discussion format may be especially useful for young investigators who seldom hear any challenges to the views of their mentors. It is our objective at this satellite to provide open and frank discussion of several controversial issues in vestibular research.

To identify areas that would benefit by such a discourse, we canvassed the vestibular community. Five general areas elicited the greatest interest: Eye-Head Coordination, Otolith Influences on Orientation and Gaze, Advances in the Vestibular Periphery, Higher Vestibular Processes and Mechanisms of Vestibular Plasticity. We then contacted a recognized leader in each area who was willing first to provide a short (1/2 hour) background summary of an area to illuminate its controversies and then direct a panel discussion to confront and resolve them. The session leaders were chosen because each had a command of the literature pertaining to their topic area and each had the persona necessary to foment spirited discussions. The session leaders are expected to hold participants to brief comments and also to be willing to probe deficiencies or inconsistencies in their presented arguments. Panel members are allowed to present only one data slide to support their arguments. Members of the audience are strongly encouraged to participate by presenting data of their own. Students (28 are supported by a conference grant from NIDCD) are also encouraged to participate through poster sessions, where they can present their stories in greater detail. Finally, one poster session consists solely of models, which are run on-site on laptops provided for that purpose. If you ever have wondered what would happen if a certain model parameter were altered, here is your chance to find out!

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