



# SSR Members Making a Difference

# A Year of Progress and Innovation

Dear SSR Members and Stakeholders,

SSR brings together reproductive scientists, academicians, clinicians, and trainees who are focused on making a positive impact on our world. Thank you all for pushing the boundaries of knowledge and fostering breakthroughs in reproductive science, from stem cell biology to the treatment of reproductive system cancers. This annual report is a testament to your commitment, drive, and curiosity. Here are some notable accomplishments from 2023 that we can take pride in:

**Annual Meeting:** More than 1,000 scientists and trainees gathered in July in Ottawa to present groundbreaking data, stay abreast of the latest developments in their respective fields, and foster connections with fellow scientists. This collaboration and knowledge sharing is helping our members advance their research and foster innovation within reproductive science.

**Publication Excellence:** The Biology of Reproduction (BOR) continues to be the premier destination for the latest reproductive science research. This is due to the SSR authors, reviewers, and readers who have contributed to the journal this year.

**Trainee Education and Leadership:** SSR is dedicated to nurturing the future leaders of reproductive science. In 2023, SSR provided pre- and post-doctoral students with leadership and training opportunities at our Annual Meeting; travel grants and presentation awards worth \$15,000; opportunities to participate in committees; board representation; and more. We are always happy to hear when people in our community say they got their start at SSR!

**Partnerships and Collaborations:** Facilitating meaningful partnerships and research opportunities is a key focus for SSR. In 2023, SSR, in partnership with FIR and supported by the Gates Foundation, held a course in Buenos Aires, Argentina for early career scientists for South America, The course was a success, which resulted in SSR and FIR receiving a \$1M grant from the Gates Foundation to continue this work in India and Africa. We have strengthened our relationship with ASRM and started a group called SPARK, to help facilitate collaboration between scientists and clinicians. We continue to foster partnerships that help us broaden our impact and drive progress in reproductive science.

Together, we have achieved significant milestones, and I am confident that the coming year will bring even more opportunities for growth, collaboration, and groundbreaking discoveries.

Sincerely,

Blanche Capel, SSR President

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# What's in Store for 2024?

See page 13 to learn more about these exciting new developments:

- New, updated website to reflect the evolution of SSR
- Expanded database functions for easy renewals and communications
- SSR members can publish their work in BOR at no cost!
- New collaborations and resources with organizations such as ASRM, RESOLVE, PCOS Challenge, and Donor Conceived.

JOIN US IN IRELAND!

Mark July 15-19, 2024, on your calendar for SSR's 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in Dublin

# **Your Support in Action**

SSR is grateful for the support of our dedicated members, which has enabled us to make significant strides in our mission and aid the next generation of reproductive scientists and researchers. We are excited to share the impact of your generosity and how your donation dollars were used this year. We invite you to click on any of the funds below to help us continue to further these initiatives in 2024.

#### **General Support**

General Endowment Fund – SSR is grateful for the more than \$87,000 in donations that were used to support all our activities this year.

#### **Trainee Support**

Bruce D. Murphy Endowment Fund for SSR Trainee

Members – The Bruce Murphy Fund supports trainee
activities at the SSR Annual Meeting. In 2023, just over
\$3,500 was donated to this fund, which was used to
support the Trainee/New Investigator Grant Workshop
and the SSR Career Center.

SSR Trainee Support Fund – The Trainee Support Fund contributed \$15,000, which enabled 25 trainees to participate in the Annual Meeting. Five of those trainees were from outside of the U.S.



#### **New Investigator Support**

Janice Bahr Endowment Fund – A self-nominated award, the Janice Bahr Junior Scientist Travel Award recognizes a Regular Member of the Society, an active Assistant Professor or position of similar rank on the tenure-track and provides them with travel assistance to attend the Annual Meeting. This year the recipient of the award was Diana Monsivais, assistant professor at Baylor College of Medicine.

<u>Virendra B. Mahesh New Investigator Fund</u> – This fund recognizes members for their outstanding research completed and published within 10 years after receiving their PhD or other equivalent professional degree. Ahmed Balboula, assistant professor at the University of Missouri, was the recipient of this award. He was cited for his many achievements in research and his willingness to collaborate with and help colleagues and trainees.

#### **Supporting Mentors**

<u>Trainee-Mentoring Award Fund</u> – This award is given to an SSR member who consistently demonstrates support and guidance exceeding the basic responsibilities of an academic advisor. Carmen Williams, deputy chief of Reproductive & Developmental Biology Laboratory at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences Reproductive Medicine Group was recognized for her unwavering support and encouragement to those she mentored.

#### **International Support**

<u>Fuller Bazer International Scientist Fund</u> – This fund recognizes scientific excellence in reproductive biology of scientists outside of North America. The winner of this award was Hefeng Huang, professor at Fudan University in Shanghai, China.

Female Gametogenesis or Follicular Development Research

John J. Eppig Endowment Fund – In 2023, the \$6,000 contributed to this fund covered travel to the SSR Annual Meeting for speakers in a designated module or session on female gametogenesis or follicular development.

#### **Neuroendocrine Research**

Virendra B. Mahesh Neuroendocrine Program Fund – This fund supports a symposium, plenary session, or similar event at the Annual Meeting with a focus on neuroendocrinology. This year, the fund contributed \$6,000 to sponsor the Virendra B. Mahesh Neuroendocrine focus session.



### **Biology of Reproduction Support**

<u>Virendra B. Mahesh Legacy Fund</u> – This fund supports maintenance and enhancement of the Biology of Research (BOR journal).

#### **Annual Meeting Support**

Anita Payne Endowment Fund – This fund supports the Anita Payne New Perspectives on Reproductive Biology Lecture at the SSR Annual Meeting and SSR trainee participation in leading-edge courses or workshops. The 2023 Anita Payne Scholarship winner was Shweta Dipali, a graduate student at Northwestern University. Her research investigates how ovarian inflammaging promotes ovarian cancer tumor initiation and expansion.

Past Presidents' Endowment Fund – This fund provides general support to SSR's Annual Meeting.



# **New Opportunities Added in 2023**

#### **RV Short Medal and Lecture Award**

SSR joined with the Society for Reproductive Biology (SRB, Australasia) and the Society for Reproduction and Fertility (SRF, UK) to establish an annual award to recognize emerging early career researchers across the globe. This award was designed in honor of Roger Short, an inspirational reproductive biologist with an astonishing depth of insight into so many aspects of reproductive biology research. Throughout his career, Roger was supportive of early career researchers, so this award is given to an innovative young researcher who has made outstanding discoveries in the field of reproductive science within a period of up to 10 years. The recipient of this award is University of Leeds Professor Niamh Forde.

#### **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Grants Award to SSR**

In 2023, SSR, in partnership with Frontiers in Reproduction (FIR), was awarded a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) grant to advance critical research in reproductive science across India and Africa. Valued at more than \$1M, the grant is helping to fund a comprehensive three-year project that provides advanced research training, expands access to technology, increases knowledge bases, and opens new international networks for low- and middle-income country (LMIC) researchers in India and Africa. Funds from this grant were used to launch an initiative to progress female contraceptive research and reproductive sciences worldwide, with a focus on improving human health via the development of female contraceptive technology in LMICs. The grant runs through October 31, 2026.

#### Opening Gates in Latin America, March 27-31

SSR partnered with the Gates Foundation and Frontiers in Reproduction (FIR) to deliver an advanced, hands-on training course to reproductive biology research scientists in Latin America. Twelve scientists representing six countries in South America gathered at the University of Argentina in Buenos Aires for this one-of-a-kind, intensive course on contraception. The course combined lectures and laboratory work with content covering oocytes, sperm, fertilization, contraception, oocyte manipulation, sperm manipulation, IVF, human semen, and advanced techniques in semen assessment.

The project was a success, receiving positive reviews from all participants. SSR and FIR collaborated to create the ideal mix of science and vision, fostering a strong community of scientists dedicated to advancing women's health globally.



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#### **Creating Sparks in the Reproduction Community**

NEW! SSR has partnered with ASRM to develop SPARK, a research network connecting basic scientists with physicians and clinicians through a community platform, UPSquad. Increase your prospects for grant funding when you join the SPARK community and connect and collaborate with others sharing your research interests!



#### SSR Support of Scientific Meetings

The Society for the Study of Reproduction (SSR) is committed to enhancing reproductive biology research through support of scientific meetings focused on topics of relevance to the society. In addition to organizing the SSR annual meeting, in 2023 the society provided support for the following meetings:

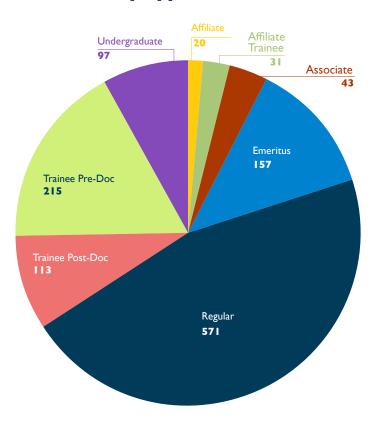
- The 9th International Symposium on the Biology of Vertebrate Sex Determination
- 2023 Gordon Research conference: Fertilization and Activation of Development
- 2023 Gordon Research Conference on Germinal Stem Cell Biology
- The 11th International Ruminant Reproduction Symposium
- Gilbert S. Greenwald Symposium on Reproductive and Developmental Sciences
- Upper Midwest Summit for Reproductive Science



# SSR 2023 By the Numbers

# Membership by type

## **Members by type**





# 6 Rising Stars and Biology of Reproduction (BOR) Winners Series Webinars

Date	Title	Registrations
1/11/2023	Rising Stars: Session I	115
2/8/2023	Rising Stars: Session 2	57
3/8/2023	Rising Stars: Session 3 (5-6pm)	91
4/12/2023	Rising Stars: Session 4	126
5/10/2023	BoR Winner: Microvesicles and exosomes released by amnion epithelial cells under oxidative stress cause inflammatory changes in uterine cells	53
9/27/2023	BoR Winner Placental strategies supporting fetal growth during normal and suboptimal gestational environments	157

# **12 Podcasts**

Date	Title	
9/27/2023	Interview with 2023 Virendra B. Mahesh New Investigator Award Winner Dr. Ahmed Balboula	
9/19/2023	Interview with 2023 Fuller W Bazer SSR International Scientist Awardee, Dr. Hefeng Huang	
9/18/2023	Interview with 2023 SSR Research Award Recipient Jodi Flaws, PhD	
9/11/2023	Interview with Dr Diana Monsivais, the 2023 SSR Bahr Jr Scientist Travel Awardee	
8/15/2023	Interview with Dr. Fuller Bazer, a 50+ year-long career dedicated to reproductive biology	
7/5/2023	Interview with 2023 SSR Heritage Honoree Dr. Fredrick Stormshak	
6/30/2023	Interview with Dr Carmen Williams, the recipient of the 2023 SSR Trainee Mentoring Award	
6/12/2023	Interview with Dr Benjamin Tsang, the 2022 SSR Distinguished Leadership and Service Awardee	
4/7/2023	Interview with 2022 SSR Research Awardee Dr Marisa Bartolomei	
2/28/2023	Interview with 2022 Fuller W Bazer SSR International Scientist Awardee, Dr Moira O'Bryan, University of Melbourne	
2/9/2023	Interview with 2022 SSR Trainee Mentoring Awardee Dr. Thomas Curry	
2/9/2023	Interview with 2022 SSR Janice Bahr Junior Scientist Travel Awardee Dr. Joe (Huanyu) Qiao	



# Congratulations to the 2023 SSR Distinguished Fellows!

Each year, the SSR Distinguished Fellowship recognizes active SSR members for their outstanding contributions to the field of reproductive biology and to the Society, illustrated by sustained high impact research, leadership, service, and mentorship. In 2023, SSR recognized these five individuals who have made such an impact in the field of reproductive biology:



Francesco DeMayo, PhD
National Institute of
Environmental Health Sciences



Michael Soares, PhD
University of Kansas
Medical Center



Monika Ward, PhD University of Hawaii



Patricia Morris, PhD
The Rockefeller University



Wei Yan, MD, PhD
The Lindquist Institute at HarborUCLA Medical Center

**2023 Annual Meeting Statistics** 



### **Attendees**

In-person 803

Trainees 2 6



Number of countries represented







Total presenters 103



Total sessions
General 4 Focus 25



Sponsorship revenue \$96,500



Revenue generated \$425,050

Save the Date for SSR's 57th Annual Meeting

July 15-19, 2024, Dublin, Ireland – our first meeting outside North America!

## SSR on the Move

#### SSR Presence at the ASRM Annual Meeting in New Orleans - October 14-18, 2023



SSR made a significant impact at the ASRM Annual Meeting in New Orleans from October 14-18, 2023. Our booth was a hub of activity, engaging attendees and showcasing our commitment to advancing reproductive knowledge. A pre-conference workshop on "Differences in Sexual Development and Gender Identity" provided a platform for in-depth discussions, while the keynote lecture by Marisa Bartolomei, PhD, explored epigenetic insights in a mouse ART model. We also strengthened ties with ASRM through a breakfast discussion on our joint SPARK Program.

## Reproductive Sciences: From Innovation to Impact

SSR Annual Meeting in Ottawa, Canada – July 11-14, 2023

In July, Ottawa played host to a powerhouse gathering of more than 1,000 SSR members, scientists, trainees, sponsors, and exhibitors. They came together to present groundbreaking data, gain knowledge, and forge connections.

The 100+ presentations and posters truly delivered on the event theme, Reproductive Sciences: From Innovation to Impact. We were thrilled to have Richard Harris, an NPR science correspondent, as our keynote speaker. Richard gave a thought-provoking talk inspired by his book, Rigor Mortis, which documents the challenges of attaining rigor and reproducibility in preclinical research.



## Thank you to our sponsors

# SSR 56th Annual Meeting

July 11-14, 2023 Ottawa, Canada

**Platinum** 

Gold







#### **Bronze**















## **Supporter**











#### **Friend**







## **Thank you for Your Continued Support**





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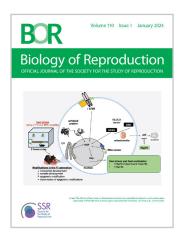
National Institute of Food and Agriculture U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



# **Looking Ahead**

SSR is the place where reproductive scientists and trainees come together for mutual support and community. It is the central hub for guidance about publishing papers, obtaining funding, finding graduate students and so much more!

In the coming months, you can look forward to these new membership benefits, collaborations, and other initiatives to support your work and advance our mission.



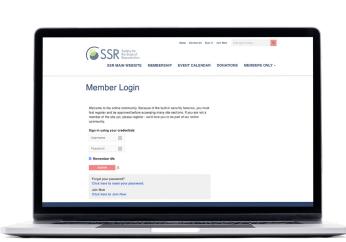
#### **Publish for free in BOR!**

Great news for SSR members who are interested in publishing their work in SSR's official journal, the Biology of Reproduction (BOR). Starting January 1, 2024, SSR members can publish their work in BOR with a standard license at no cost. Please note that open access fees are optional and will still be the responsibility of the authors.

#### **New SSR Website**

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We are launching a new website (ssr.org) that communicates SSR and our mission in a fresh and contemporary manner. We've revamped the website navigation and features to facilitate easy access to the news and resources you need, enhancing your overall experience.





## **New Membership Portal**

In mid-December 2023, we unveiled a new and improved SSR membership portal designed to provide you with the space to collaborate, engage, learn, and connect with other SSR members around the world. It features a streamlined, modern look, enhanced navigation, and expanded functionality that will make your membership more valuable. Additionally, you will be able to manage your membership profile, check your payments, add your CV, contribute to online communities, access member-only content, view the online membership directory, set your dues up for auto-pay so you don't have to worry about renewing and much, much more.



## **New SPARK Community Platform**

ASRM and the Society for the Study of Reproduction (SSR) have collaborated to develop SPARK, a research network connecting basic scientists with physicians and clinicians through the use of the community platform UPSquad. Increase your prospects for grant funding when you join the SPARK community and connect and collaborate with others sharing your research interests! Learn more about the SPARK community platform and begin connecting and collaborating via research-focused breakout sessions here.

## **New Opportunities to Collaborate**

SSR thrives on collaboration, not just within its ranks but beyond. As a benefit to our members, we continue to identify and develop partnerships and research opportunities that fund reproductive research. Stay tuned for details about these new partnerships in 2024!

## **New Emerging Investigator Grant Award Program**



# SSR: The Future, Conceived.

The Society for the Study of Reproduction (SSR) was founded in 1967 to promote the study of reproduction by fostering interdisciplinary communication among scientists, holding conferences, and publishing meritorious studies, and contributing to the development and mentoring of young scientists. Today we are a global association of more than 1,600 active members, including scientists, veterinarians, students, and physicians, representing over 50 countries.

SSR members have made key contributions to stem cell biology, transgenesis, treatment of infertility, contraception, livestock production, pregnancy health, treatment of reproductive system cancers, and identification of environmental contaminants.

#### Mission:

Advance the Science of Reproduction, Fertility, and Development for the Benefit of Humans and Animals.

#### Vision:

A Sustainable World Through the Science of Reproduction, Fertility, and Development.

#### **Board of Directors**

SSR is managed by a Board of Directors consisting of the Executive Council, six Directors, and two Trainee Representatives elected by a ballot of the Regular Members of the Society.



Executive Council (2023-2024)

#### President:

Blanche Capel, Duke University Medical Center

#### Vice President:

Jennifer Wood, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

#### Vice President Elect:

Mellissa Mann, University of Pittsburgh

#### Past President:

Peter J. Hansen, University of Florida

#### Secretary:

Jodi Anne Flaws, University of Illinois

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Lane Christenson, University of Kansas Medical Center

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- Rebecca Krisher, Genus
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- T. Rajendra Kumar, University of Colorado Anshutz Medical Campus
- Julie Kim, Northwestern University
- Francesca Duncan, Northwestern University
- Rocío Rivera, University of Missouri

#### Editors-in-Chief (ex officio):

Romana Nowak, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Mary Zelinski, Oregon Health and Science University

#### Executive Director (ex officio):

Julie Utano, Society for the Study of Reproduction

## Early Career Investigator:

Diana Monsivais, Baylor College of Medicine

#### Trainee Representatives

- Jacinta Martin, University of Newcastle
- Alison Ermisch, University of Nebraska-Lincoln