

THE NORTH AMERICAN PAIN SCHOOL (NAPS)



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The North American Pain School (NAPS) is an educational initiative of the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) and the Analgesic, Anaesthetic, and Addiction Clinical Trial Translations, Innovations, Opportunities, and Networks (ACTTION) partnership, presented by the Quebec Pain Research Network.

Each year, NAPS brings leading experts in the field of pain research and management together with 30 trainees to provide a unique educational and networking experience at the incredible Chateau Montebello (approximately ninety minutes out of Montreal).

The first NAPS intake (2016) consisted solely of trainees from the northern hemisphere. Subsequent years however, have included an Australian flavour, with Lincoln Tracy and Anne Burke (APS President Elect) invited to attend in 2017 and 2018, respectively. Read on for recaps of their time at NAPS – and why you should apply for the 2019 intake.

Lincoln Tracy – Class of 2017

I first thought about applying to NAPS for 2016 when I saw it advertised in an email from IASP. It immediately struck me as an incredible opportunity not only to learn from internationally recognised pain researchers, but also to meet people working on the same problems as I was. I wasted no time in preparing and submitting my application.

Unfortunately, I was not successful in my application to be part of the first NAPS intake. I remember chatting with Jeffrey Mogil (NAPS Director) about NAPS when he came past my poster at the World Congress in Yokohama. It sounded like the first year had been a resounding success, so I made sure I applied again in 2017.

It was a case of second time lucky for me. The week after I submitted my PhD thesis, I was off to Montebello. While it was an honour to win the 'most distance travelled to be there' award, I got so much more than that out my time at NAPS.

My biggest take away from NAPS has been combining other interests with my research career. This has predominantly been in the form of freelance writing. My work – including interviews and session recaps from the APS meeting in Sydney this year – has featured on [Pain Research Forum](#) and [RELIEF](#).

More importantly, NAPS introduced me to so many great people. This provided even more of an incentive to attend the World Congress in Boston earlier this year – I would actually know more than a handful of people at an international conference! I truly value the friendships that I have formed by attending NAPS – and hope they remain strong for years to come.

I would definitely recommend NAPS to all postgraduate students and clinical trainees who are interested in attending. You just need to lean into everything that the week throws at you – it is a brilliant, chaotic, and immensely enjoyable experience.

Anne Burke – Class of 2018

I first heard about NAPS via an email from the Canadian Pain Society – I had presented a poster at their conference in 2016 and was obviously still on their database. Thank goodness I was because I'm not sure I would have heard about

NAPS otherwise. As soon as I read the email I looked up the website and from that point on, I was incredibly keen to go!

While there were many reasons that made me want to apply, one thing in particular stood out: NAPS provided a rare opportunity to focus on the translational aspects of research. These are important parts of what we do and why we do it – yet standard conferences and training days rarely cover them.

I came away from NAPS with a fresh perspective on my work; a change in mindset that proved to be invaluable in the final wrap up of my thesis.

It is hard to describe how amazing the NAPS experience was. You spend five days – with a fantastic group of people in a stunning setting – focussing on research and professional matters. What's not to love about that?

Attending NAPS allowed me to form an incredible international network with inspiring researchers and I'm really looking forward to the collaborative projects that I know NAPS alumni will deliver in the not too distant future.

To anyone who is considering applying for NAPS, I'd say most definitely go for it! But.... if you are lucky enough to be accepted, then make sure you take advantage of every opportunity that's offered, otherwise you'll miss a once in a lifetime chance to learn from some incredible minds!

The next NAPS will run from June 23rd to 28th 2019. Applications open in mid-January and close on March 3rd, 2019 – so make sure you don't miss out. Visit <https://northamericanpainschool.com/> for further information.

Declaration

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.