

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/

Conference Title: 10th BioMalPar/EVIMalaR Conference and Symposium: "Biology and Pathology of the Malaria Parasite, The Highs and The Highs"

Travel Dates: 12 – 16 May 2014

Location: Heidelberg, Germany

Group member(s): Seth A. Amanfo (Francisca Mutapi & David R. Cavanagh Groups)

Aims: Present poster on preliminary data of PhD work on malaria

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

Over the past ten years, the BioMalPar/EVIMalaR group has been organising an annual malaria conference at the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) in Heidelberg, Germany, where leading scientists in the field of malaria biology and immunology gather to share knowledge and assess progress towards finding an effective vaccine for malaria, a disease which is responsible for over one million deaths annually, particularly children under five years and pregnant women in sub-Saharan Africa. The 10th edition of the conference was on the theme 'Biology and Pathology of the Malaria Parasite' with a symposium on "The Highs and The Highs" on the final day. About 380 researchers and postgraduate students from Europe, and overseas (including Africa, America, Asia and Australia) attended the conference. There were presentations on ground-breaking findings on fundamental malaria research.

On each day there were scientific sessions, keynote talks, poster previews and poster presentations. The scientific sessions which included topics on vaccines and immune avoidance, cellular mechanisms, immunology, var gene diversity and regulations, drug resistance and pathogenesis, had various speakers deliver a 20 minute presentation followed by questions and comments from the audience. Poster sessions were grouped into four clusters of immunology and pathophysiology, parasite molecular and cell biology, vector-parasite interactions, and modelling and systems biology. I presented my poster on the 'Serological dynamics of multiple *Plasmodium* species co-infections in human populations' on the second day of the conference, for which I received very positive feedbacks.

There was a commercial aspect to the conference as biotech companies involved in malaria research displayed an array of equipment, reagents and various products of interest. I had the opportunity to be shown a demonstration on how an ELISPOT analysis with the ImmunoSpot® solution from CTL Europe GmbH works (a product I will be using in the future). The final day of the conference involved a symposium on The High and Highs of malaria research. EVIMalaR lifetime achievement and promising African scientist awards were respectively given to Prof. Marita Troye-Bloomberg of Stockholm University and Dr. Faith Osier of the Kenya Medical Research Institute in Kilifi, Kenya.

The conference gave me the opportunity to present my work, learn from others and the new developments and future directions of malaria research, as well as network with both established and early career scientists in the field of malaria research. I am therefore grateful to the James Rennie Bequest for the funds which enabled me to have such a great experience in the historic city of Heidelberg, Germany.