

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/

Conference Title: 10th Annual BioMalPar I EVIMalaR Conference and EVIMalaR Symposium

Travel Dates: 11TH MAY – 16TH MAY, 2014

Location: European Molecular Biology Laboratory, Heidelberg, Germany

Group member(s): Yvonne Azasi

Aims: To present my work in the form of a poster

To network with research scientists and fellow students

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

The BioMalPar I EVIMalaR conference is held annually at the European Molecular Biology Laboratory, Heidelberg, to bring malaria researchers from different countries and fields to share their findings, interact and address issues about the disease with the aim of making an impact on public health in the long run. I was grateful for the opportunity to be part of the 10th BioMalPar I EVIMalaR Conference and EVIMalaR Symposium on the theme 'Biology and Pathology of the Malaria Parasite'.

There were about three hundred and eighty participants and it consisted of 4 clusters which were *Immunobiology and Pathophysiology*, *Parasite Molecular and Cell Biology*, *Vector Parasite Interactions* and *Modelling and Systems Biology*. It was quite intensive, beginning at 9 am till after 9 pm with talks divided into 8 sessions, spanning the first three days and two poster sessions for the first two days, arranged in such a way to make it educative/informative but yet interactive and fun at the same time, with a free pass to the Heidelberg Castle and two parties. The fourth day was the symposium which consisted of mostly lectures and reports from the four clusters of EVIMalaR.

My purpose for attending the conference was to present what I have done in my PhD so far my work, find out what others are doing about malaria and network with other researchers working on the disease. I attended all the sessions and was glad for the opportunity to listen to and interact with the likes of Peter Bull, Alister Craig and Patrick Duffy, who have made a mark in my area of interest, cytoadherence in malaria.

I was also well pleased with how my poster presentation went. I was able to inform others about my work via my poster titled 'Adhesion properties of *P. falciparum* infected erythrocytes that bind human brain endothelial cells and the role of EPCR'. There was a lot interest in the role of Endothelial Protein C (EPCR) on my poster, as there had been a recent publication in *Nature* relating EPCR to severe malaria, I had very good discussions about it and shared ideas with some brilliant scientists including fellow students, which I could incorporate into my thesis. It was also bonus to hear that another group had gotten similar results, a confirmation of my findings that in relation to host receptors in cytoadherence, there was more to severe malaria than EPCR. I also got very good feedback from my poster and useful ideas for the field work that I was about to embark on right after the conference.

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

It was great to see what others were doing, new findings directly related to my work such as interaction of PHIST proteins with ATS of PfEMP1, and what others were doing in the other fields of malaria such as the development of an assay for screening transmission blocking molecules, and how these all fit together in the fight against the disease still claiming lots of lives. I also learnt about new technologies emerging in the field that could be beneficial to my research.

I am grateful to the James Rennie Bequest for the travel award for such a valuable experience that enabled me to share my work, make new friends in research and come back with useful ideas for my work and also to share with other members of our group.