

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/

Conference Title: Malaria Gordon Research Conference and Seminar

Travel Dates: 25th July to 31st July, 2015

Location: Melia Golf Vichy Catalan Business and Convention Center, Girona, Spain

Group member(s): Yvonne Azasi

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

To network with my peers and other research scientists

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

The Gordon Research Conference and Seminar, is held every two years and the theme for this year was 'Translating Malaria Research to the Field'. The seminar was organised for students and postdoctoral fellows a day and a half before the main conference to enable us students and young scientists to interact, present and discuss our data. This was followed by the main conference, which showcased talks from established scientists presenting new and cutting edge data from their groups, institutes or companies and also interesting posters from other scientists.

There were two sessions on each day for the seminar; with 'Transmission and Epidemiology' and 'Vaccine Development and Immunology' on the first day, 'Parasite Biology and Drug Development, and 'Severe and Pregnancy-Associated Malaria', the session for my talk, on the second day. The conference also had similar arrangements of sessions per day on immunology, biology of the parasite, vaccines, drug development, transmission, animal models and severe malaria. Both the seminar and conference featured exciting data mainly on basic and applied research and the link between the two.

I was glad to achieve my aim of presenting my data in the form of a talk and a poster (at both the seminar and conference), which had a lot of interest, as it was on a receptor (Endothelial Protein C Receptor) for malaria parasites involved in cerebral malaria, currently one of the hot topics in the area. It generated very good discussions and useful feedback during the sessions and even afterwards. At the seminar, I had the opportunity to talk to colleagues and make new friends who shared similar experiences. I also got very good advice from the early-stage researchers on the next stage after the PhD, such how to apply for jobs among others. It was not a huge conference so it was very easy to interact with a lot of people and I had the opportunity to talk to some senior scientists about possible future work at the end of my PhD.

It was a very good learning experience. I had the unique opportunity to learn (new data), about the progress of the RTS,S which is the most advanced vaccine candidate for malaria and seem to be possibly rolled out for use in the very near future and also learn about other new vaccines candidates that are being tried and showing promising results. I found it fascinating that currently, controlled human malaria infections were being used to study the mechanism of the disease and showing exciting results. It was also good to learn about what others were doing in the understanding and development of drugs to address the effect of emerging drug resistance to artemisinin, the first line drug used in combination with others

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for treatment of malaria, efforts to control transmission of the disease, and understand the host and parasite mechanisms of the disease. I was also particularly interested in Danny Milner's insightful talk on possibly the biggest autopsy study so far on cerebral malaria in children and that of others on severe malaria which were all in my area of research, investigating the mechanisms cerebral malaria in children.

I am grateful for the opportunity to attend this conference and seminar, and to the James Rennie Bequest for supporting my travel. This has tremendously increased my knowledge in the field (as most of the data presented at the conference were new and unpublished), it has greatly contributed to my research work and my PhD training and I am glad that I (together with my supervisor and another PI) was able to share what I learnt with others here at our Malaria Meeting.