

# JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

## REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

<b>Expedition/Project/ Conference Title:</b>	Genetic control of immune cell activation: Implications for autoimmune disease
<b>Travel Dates:</b>	19-24 August 2015
<b>Location:</b>	Henningsvaer, Lofoten, Norway
<b>Group member(s):</b>	Cara Bray
<b>Aims:</b>	To identify the most promising pathways for future research in autoimmune disease.

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### OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

I was invited to present my work as a poster at the IVth Nordic Meeting on Genetics and Pathogenesis of Immunopathological Disease, which took place in Lofoten, Norway from August 20-24th. The meeting consisted of 80 participants from Europe and America, making for quite a small, intimate setting for my first conference.

The speakers and participants included some of the world's leading immunologists, as well as junior scientists and trainees such as myself. The format of the meeting greatly encouraged meeting people in social situations, starting with a 3-hr boat trip across a fjord to reach Henningsvaer, and continuing in a variety of local organised activities between session talks, such as hikes and boat excursions. These informal settings facilitated discussion by making senior scientists easily approachable; as I did not initially know anybody attending the meeting, I appreciated this greatly. Similarly, accommodation during the meeting was allocated based on age and area of interest. This arrangement allowed me to meet and form friendships with my peers from around Europe, bonds we hope to maintain going forward in our careers.

Besides the value of meeting other immunologists face-to-face, the meeting also hosted a number of interesting formal talks and discussions. These were not only fascinating and relevant science in and of themselves, they also served to provide a greater context for my own work, as well as a picture of current opinions in the field. The final session was a plenary talk that introduced several divergent viewpoints, and stimulated some very interesting scientific and philosophical discussion. This meeting was also my first opportunity to present my work outside of the university. Not only was it gratifying to see the interest my project generated, I also received some great feedback and suggestions from researchers of varied backgrounds.

The James Rennie Bequest enabled me to participate in what several participants described as the best meeting they'd ever attended. It was particularly well-suited as a first conference due to its size and emphasis on discussion, as well as its focused topic and caliber of speakers. The connections I made in Lofoten may prove invaluable throughout my PhD and my future career.