

# **JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST**

## **REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE**

**Expedition/Project/Conference Title:** 10<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Parasitology.....

**Travel Dates:** August 3 – 11<sup>th</sup>, 2002.....

**Location:** Vancouver, Canada .....

**Group Member(s):** American Society of Parasitologists, Canadian Society of Zoologists,  
World Federation of Parasitologists.....

**Aims:** 1) To present my Ph. D. research at a large international gathering of experts in my field  
2) To meet and discuss possible collaboration with colleagues based in North America and  
Australasia.....

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

I was delighted to receive a James Rennie grant to attend the 10<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Parasitology. This congress is held only once every four years, and with almost 2000 participants, it is one of the largest meetings of scientists in my field. In addition to the support I received from the James Rennie Bequest, my trip was also partly funded by a student travel award from the American Society of Parasitologists.

A major theme of this meeting was parasite ecology. There were numerous presentations devoted to describing the diversity and population dynamics of parasites in their natural environments. Of particular interest was a symposium on the biodiversity of parasites in the Arctic (E. Hoberg); revealing that parasites play important functional roles even in harsh environments. A presentation by D. J. Marcogliese highlighted the potential for parasites to act as biological indicators in aquatic environments. As a lab-based scientist who has worked exclusively with parasites of medical importance, this overview of the ubiquity and ecological importance of parasitism was very eye opening and intriguing.

There were also numerous presentations of direct relevance to my Ph. D. research: parasite transmission biology and evolution. A. M. Kuris from the University of California gave a very

interesting presentation that contrasted the evolution of 'deadliness' in parasites with different transmission modes. This overview complimented an excellent symposium, chaired by J. Moore and M. de Jong-Brink, which focused on the specific physiological mechanisms by which parasites can alter their host's behaviour to increase their transmission success. Another highlight was the symposium on parasite transmission biology in which many different factors that influence infectivity were explored, including host genetic variability (R. C. Tinsley), population size (D. A. Lysne), and immunity (M. Viney).

I presented my poster, 'The effect of malaria genetic diversity on mosquito feeding and fecundity', on the second day of the meeting. This provided an excellent opportunity to meet and get feedback from scientists who work on similar issues. During the conference, I had the opportunity to discuss my research with several malaria and parasite evolutionary biologists including G. Targett and H. Hurd from the United Kingdom, and A. Kuris and R. Poulin from the United States and New Zealand respectively. These interactions were the most rewarding part of this excellent meeting. I am very grateful to the James Rennie Bequest for making this experience possible.

HEATHER FERGUSON