

# JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

## REPORT ON CONFERENCE

**Conference Title:** Abcam Stem Cells Meeting .....

**Travel Dates:** 12-17 December 2006.....

**Location:** Cancun, Mexico.....

**Group Member(s):** John Hall .....

**Aims:** Poster presentation and conference attendance .....

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

I would like to thank the James Rennie Bequest for the travel award which enabled me to attend the Abcam Stem Cells Meeting in Cancun, Mexico on the 13-17<sup>th</sup> of December, hosted at the Hilton Cancun Golf Resort and Spa. The setting itself was superb, with the hotel conference facilities and white sandy beaches with the Caribbean Sea, directly juxtaposed.

The main topics covered over the three day meeting were: Stem Cells and cancer, Differentiation potential of adult Stem Cells, ES cell differentiation, Nuclear reprogramming, Stem Cell evolution/development, microRNAs, Retrotransposons, Epigenetics and Asymmetry. As such the meeting was very broad covering a multitude of stem cell types and techniques. I found the talks on stem cells and cancer particularly interesting. My favourite talks were given by Sean Morrison – entitled: “Stem cell self-renewal, cancer cell proliferation and aging”; which described the function of INK4a in the aging of the stem cell compartment. And from Rudolph Jaenisch who gave the opening talk in the conference entitled: “Nuclear Cloning, Embryonic Stem Cells and Cell Therapy: Promise, Problems, Reality”. This was a very interesting talk about the hype associated with stem cell therapies and the problems which need to be overcome before which reach a realistic point where stem cell research moves from bench-to-bedside. He clearly detailed his previous work with cloning and his opinion that the epigenetic state of cloned embryos may be a problem which can never be truly resolved. Another interesting talk was given by Laura O’Neil entitled: “Comparison of histone modifications on key regulatory genes during early mouse development using C-ChIP”. This was an interesting use of pioneering technology “carrier chromatin immuno-precipitation” which had been used to interesting effect in detailing the differences between ES cells and ICM cells at the chromatin level.

For me, the most interesting parts of the meeting were during coffee breaks, lunches and poster-sessions whereby as a young scientist it was possible to engage with field-leading scientists. Furthermore, this gave me the opportunity to discuss my research and beyond that, post-doctoral positions with a number of people. Having attended the meeting I now have a clearer idea of the field as a whole, the key players within this field and also the direction I wish to take my research. I would like to take this opportunity again to thank the James Rennie Bequest for facilitating my attendance and Fiona Watt and Abcam for organising this conference.