

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/

Conference Title: The 51st European Human Genetics Conference

Travel Dates: June 16th – 19th, 2018

Location: Milan, Italy

Group member(s): Richard Fordjour Oppong

Aims: To give a talk of part of my PhD research at the conference

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

The European Human Genetics conference 2018, presented the platform for all workers and researchers in human and medical genetics, statistics and informatics to review the state of the art, present new advances and exchange ideas in confronting problems in human genetics research. The 4-day conference was held in Milan, Italy, and it brought together more than 4000 scientists and exhibitors from around the world.

The conference kicked off with the welcoming addresses and opening plenary lectures on complex genetics, and a talk by Serena Nik-Zainal on recent advances in mutational signatures of human cells, which was essentially an eye-opener for me. The conference programme involved educational sessions on wide-ranging topics in human genetics, workshops on NGS in the clinic, exome sequencing and variant interpretation and career development for scientific millennials and on phenotype-genotype data collection and analysis and a lot more. There were concurrent sessions and the works presented covered topics in human genetics from basic research in population and quantitative genetics and evolution to more applied fields such as genetic counselling and gene therapy. There were interactive sessions where participants break into interest groups to discuss topics of common interest and this was particularly useful to me as a student because I had the opportunity to interact with leaders of the field as we discussed key issues in human genetics. There were plenary sessions that celebrated landmark advances in the field of human genetics such as how CRISPR-Cas9 technology revolutionized genome engineering delivered by Emanuelle Charpentier. Awards were presented to outstanding researchers in the field.

The conference also had poster sessions which covered a lot more topics. This session was very exciting as well because it provided some kind of structure during the breaks by unconsciously defining some sort of a path to follow during the break as you walk through

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the posters which was great. I had a good time walking through the posters and reading all the various works on display and I had the chance to interact with some presenters one on one and exchanged ideas. I also had a chance to interact with corporate exhibitors and this brought me up to speed on the technological advancements in the field.

The highlight of my conference was on the morning of the fourth day when I had the chance to present part of my PhD work in the concurrent session on statistical genetics. My talk, which described a regional heritability method for analysing complex traits using haplotype blocks defined by natural recombination boundaries, was well received because I received useful comments and feedback on the work and on other ways to improve the work.

In all, it was a positive experience and I learnt a lot at the ESHG 2018 meeting in Milan, Italy and I am grateful for the funds provided by the James Rennie Bequest to enable me to attend the conference.