

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION / PROJECT / CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/

Conference Title: Molecular Parasitology Meeting XXXIV

Travel Dates: 17th – 21st September, 2023

Location: Woods Hole, MA, USA

Group member(s): Stanley Otoboh

Aims:

1. gain knowledge of the latest research in molecular parasitology.
2. present a poster on my PhD work.
3. network and explore career opportunities within the field.

Photography consent form attached: Yes
(please refer to your award letter) No

OUTCOME (a minimum of 500 words):-

I had the opportunity of attending the Molecular Parasitology Meeting (MPM) XXXIV which held at the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL) in Woods Hole, MA, USA, from September 17th to 21st, 2023. The meeting which had over 400 attendees, including researchers ranging from principal investigators (PIs) to students, offered an excellent environment for knowledge exchange and collaborations. The meeting's programme included diverse talks and poster sessions of ongoing research in molecular parasitology. It also featured a plenary talk on "From Mink to Parasites and Gender in science: An exciting journey" by Prof Francine Ntoumi, and a keynote address by Prof Alan Cowman "Exploring the Biology of the Malaria Parasite: Some Successes and Failures".

One major highlight for me was the stimulating talks, some of which were particularly relevant to my current study. One discussion explored how febrile temperatures impact PfEMP1 trafficking, revealing that heat stress at 39°C leads to increased PfEMP1 trafficking to the surface of *P. falciparum*, resulting in increased cytoadhesion. Another intriguing talk was one which explored the AP2/AXAS/MORC promoter complex and its potential role in *var* gene transcription, with the knockout of AP2 found to upregulate the expression of sub-telomeric *var* genes.

I had the opportunity to present a poster on my PhD research titled "Genetic validation of the function of PfEMP1 on *P. falciparum* rosette formation." The poster session was quite engaging and interactive. I received valuable constructive feedback that not only refined my ideas but also provided fresh perspectives on my work.

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Additionally, the meeting provided valuable networking opportunities, as I established connections with research experts and fellow peers. It was exciting to meet in person and discuss with some of the authors whose works I have read and cited in my research. I took advantage of the opportunity to speak to PIs about potential career opportunities. I believe that these new connections hold potential for future collaborations.

Beyond the science, the MPM also had fun social events and games, as well as a lobster banquet, which was memorable. Also, I took some time to explore the beautiful town of Woods Hole, including visits to the Science Aquarium and the beautiful beaches.

Indeed, the MPM XXXIV was an invaluable and memorable experience. The knowledge gained, feedback received, and networks established will undoubtedly contribute to the advancement of my research and career. I am grateful to the James Rennie Bequest for the travel award, which made my attendance to the meeting possible.