

James Rennie Bequest Report

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Spetsai Summer School 2001

4-14 September 2001, Greece

My successful application to the 'James Rennie Bequest' has enabled me to attend and participate in a very well organised and interesting conference. The opening lecture was given by Professor Matthias W. Hentze, head of the gene expression programme of the EMBL in Heidelberg. The conference continued with a series of talks given by invited speakers who are experts in their field of scientific research, e.g. Prof. Alan R. Fersht and Prof. Charles Weissmann. The talks were grouped according to seven areas of research;

- protein synthesis and macromolecular mimicry
- protein folding and quality control
- targeting and trafficking
- maturation, recognition and degradation
- misfolding and disease
- protein design
- bioinformatics

The series of talks provided students with an extremely informative mixture of fundamental background knowledge and new findings and recent publications from the various research groups. The delivery of all the talks was excellent and the speakers helped to clarify certain points from my personal reading. The talks and the following discussions helped me to gain more insights in the large field of protein biology. Listening to the broad scope of the talks gave me a better appreciation of how different disciplinary research areas associate to give a more complete understanding of a subject. The information I acquired from attending the talks will prove to be extremely advantageous for my own research project.

In addition to the programme of talks, two poster sessions were held during the meeting to allow both PhD students and invited speakers to present their work. The poster sessions were an ideal opportunity for me to present my own work to an international audience. My poster generated some interest and positive feedback, particularly from a scientist working also on bacterial respiration. I found the poster session invaluable as it gave me the unique opportunity to informally discuss my work with leading scientists. The poster presentation enabled me to establish future work contacts for exchange of information and ideas. Furthermore, I obtained some interesting advice on the purification of recombinant proteins which might prove very useful.

As a first year PhD student intending to start a successful career in scientific research, the international conference was fundamental for making future work contacts. The conference hosted many opportunities for informal discussion both with experts in their field of research and other PhD students. I established contacts with scientists from Denmark, Norway and Sweden and we have kept in contact since my return to Scotland. Networking with scientists from different countries was particularly advantageous for me as I hope to find work as a researcher within the European community once I have finished my Ph.D. in Edinburgh.

The travel grant I received from the James Rennie Bequest has allowed me the valuable opportunity of attending my first international meeting. To participate at the meeting and represent the Institute of Cell and Molecular Biology at Edinburgh University has proved an extremely rewarding experience. This experience adds positively to my education and will help me to complete my Ph.D. successfully.