

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

**Expedition/Project/
Conference Title:** The 12th Biennial Congress of the Anaerobe Society of the Americas
(Anaerobe 2014)

Travel Dates: June 26th – July 2nd, 2014

Location: Chicago, Illinois USA

Group member(s): Aparna Shankar (Dr. Garry Blakely Lab)

Aims: To present my ongoing PhD work as a poster titled 'Interactions between the opportunistic pathogen *Bacteroides fragilis* and host proteins' and to network with other scientific groups working in my field of study

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

Anaerobe 2014, a joint meeting of the Anaerobe Society of the Americas (ASA) and the Society for Microbial Ecology and Diseases, was held at Westin River North Hotel, Chicago, Illinois from June 28th – July 1st 2014. This forum witnessed the active participation of clinicians and scientists from around the world, to explore the role of anaerobes in both health and disease. Over 180 papers, including the work of nearly 600 scientists from more than 30 countries in the field of anaerobic bacteriology, were presented at the conference. The broad categories included Ecology of the Microbiota, Beneficial Microbes, Biofilms in Anaerobic Infections, Diagnostic and Laboratory Techniques, Antimicrobials and Resistance. Special emphasis was given to *Clostridium difficile* pathogenesis, treatment and immunity.

A workshop on Anaerobe identification susceptibility was organised on the first day of the conference. There were satellite symposiums on Day 3 and Day 4 from 7.30-8.30 am. Morning sessions began at 08.30 am and presentations were divided into 2 broad categories. Poster sessions were between 1 pm and 2 pm after the student competition presentations. Afternoon talks were from 2 – 5.50 pm. There were wine & cheese and banquet receptions in the evenings which provided a great platform to interact with the speakers and engage in interesting scientific discussions. The congress was also well attended by the industrial community in the role of patrons as well as exhibitors. Advanced Instruments, Shel Lab, Microbiology International and other major commercial establishments exhibited their laboratory equipments and procedures. They also responded to our queries.

The presentations in certain sessions were quite informative with respect to my field of study. Some of the interesting sessions I had attended were:

Ecology of the Microbiota

Beneficial Microbiome Members- Probiotics, Biodiversity of Intestinal Lactic Acid Bacteria

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Biofilms in Anaerobic Infections- Microbial Biofilms and Colon Cancer, *C. difficile* biofilms

Diagnostic and Laboratory Techniques- Maldi-TOF MS in the Field of Anaerobes, Animal models for *C. difficile* Infections

Whole Genome Sequencing- Discovery of the female urinary microbiota with the with the help of complementary high throughput DNA sequencing-based approaches

Antimicrobials and Resistance- Drug Pipeline for Anaerobic Infections, International clone of Multiresistant *Bacteroides fragilis* Isolates

Clostridium difficile Treatment & Immunity- Optimizing Existing Therapies, Emerging Drugs and Vaccines

The posters were a storehouse of information and were well presented. There were two posters which were closely related to my work. Discussions with the groups provided me valuable insights into plasminogen binding and activation by *Bacteroides fragilis* which is of great significance to my protein interaction studies. I also got constructive feedback on my poster presentation which would positively help me in the course of my PhD completion. Furthermore, Anaerobe 2014 posed a great opportunity to network with other laboratory groups and industrial professionals which broadened my scientific knowledge, thus assisting in career development.

Hand in hand with the effective scientific progress, the trip gifted me a chance to experience United States for the first time and explore a few cultural sites.

I express my sincere gratitude to all the travel grants awarded to me, namely the James Rennie Bequest, Society for General Microbiology and European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases. Thank you so much for the support.