JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION / PROJECT / CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/ Conference Title: Molecular Parasitology Meeting XXXIV (MPM 2023)

Travel Dates: September 17 - 21, 2023

Location: Woods Hole, Massachusetts, USA.

Group member(s): -

Aims: To present my work at the Molecular Parasitology Meeting 2023

Photography consent form attached:
(please refer to your award letter)

☐ Yes
☐ No

OUTCOME (a minimum of 500 words):-

I attended The Molecular Parasitology Meeting at Woods Hole in September of 2023. The meeting spanned 4 days, was attended by over 400 people, and delved into different aspects of parasite biology like molecular biology, biochemistry, cell biology, drug development and targets, host-parasite interactions, and methodological innovations. Attending this meeting provided me with the opportunity to network with leading researchers in the field, discuss my research with scientists from diverse scientific backgrounds and learn about the different research going on in the filed of malaria biology.

There were many notable talks on parasite that are responsible for major diseases – like *Plasmodium, Trypanosome* and *Toxoplasma*. To name a few, I found the plenary talk on the application of machine learning to study the interactome of the malaria parasite, talk on VSG antigen presentation in Trypanosoma, talk on ribonuclear complexes in Plasmodium falciparum, and gene regulation in Toxoplasma through ribosome profiling very fascinating.

The conference was a treasure trove of knowledge, offering insights into single-cell approaches, molecular characterisation of virulence, as well as genome-level screens for genes and targets. I particularly appreciated talks and expertise on proteomics, gametocyte biology, malaria transmission and microscopy as it directly relates to my own research on the role of ubiquitination in malaria transmission.

I had the honour of presenting a talk on my PhD work. The feedback and questions received during the presentation were invaluable, providing me with new perspectives and ideas for refining my research. Presenting my talk has opened new collaborations, that have complemented the findings of my research in a synergistic way.

Attending the Molecular Parasitology meeting has significantly contributed to my professional development. The exposure to diverse research methodologies and the chance to interact with established researchers have enhanced my skills and broadened my understanding of molecular parasitology. One of the greatest benefits of the conference was the opportunities that it provided to network Engaging in discussions and exchanging ideas with peers expanded my professional network and opened doors for potential future collaborations/ employment.

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I also thoroughly enjoyed the talks given by the Keynote speaker, Prof. Alan Cowman and the Plenary Speaker Francine Ntoumi. Prof. Cowman’s talk outlined his academic journey, which was very inspirational and insightful. I was also able to appreciate how the hard work and passion of scientists advances the field, as well as the importance of industrial collaborations in translating research into drugs and disease interventions.

Prof. Francine Ntoumi's talk offered valuable insights into the persistent challenges faced in academia. She highlighted the importance of ensuring that the fruits of knowledge are distributed equitably and emphasized the need to be mindful of our privileges. As someone hailing from India, a country confronting challenges akin to those faced by Prof. Ntoumi in Congo, her words resonated deeply. It served as a powerful reminder of the collective responsibility we bear in leveraging science for the benefit of society.

Being an international student, with limited travel funding, my ability to attend meetings like this depends on funding bodies like James Rennie, which support the academic development of students through travel awards. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the James Rennie Bequest for providing support that made my attendance at the Molecular Parasitology meeting possible.