

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION / PROJECT / CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/

Conference Title: Lorne Genome 2023 conference

Travel Dates: 12th to 14th February 2023

Location: Lorne, Australia

Group member(s): Marah Jnied

Aims: Present my work at Lorne Genome conference, Network with peers and leaders in the field and explore postdoc opportunities following my PhD

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

OUTCOME (a minimum of 500 words):-

The Lorne Genome conference 2023 offered a great opportunity for me to present the most recent work from my PhD and interact with peers and leaders in the fields of gene expression, genomics, and comparative genomics. This conference was the second in-person meeting I have attended during my 4 year PhD, due to the COVID pandemic. It presented me with a unique opportunity to get valuable feedback on my work as I prepare to finish my PhD and write my results up for publication. The broad scope of topics presented at this conference and the attendance of scientists outside the field of Mycology led to interesting discussions, questions, and suggestions regarding my project and future work.

The presentations at the conference offered a great learning opportunity to broaden my scientific horizons and consider the next steps for my career. For example, the talk titled "Discovery and characterization of splicing regulatory networks implicated in brain disorders" by Professor Benjamin Blencowe described the role of alternative splicing in the regulation of neuronal networks and its contribution to diseases when disrupted. Professor Blencowe spoke about using machine learning, single cell transcriptome profiling, and functional genomic strategies to discover and characterize a highly conserved Alternative Splicing regulatory network comprised of "microexons". This topic is outside of my regular sphere of fungal knowledge, and it was very interesting and inspiring to learn more about the applications of gene editing strategies in adjacent fields. Additionally, I had a chance to speak to Professor Blencowe in person during the student-speaker lunch, to learn more about his research and his work at the Donnelly Centre for Cellular & Biomolecular Research at University of Toronto.

During the conference, I also attended a Science Communication Workshop titled "Sharing your story: the how and why of communicating about your research public engagement workshop" by Associate Professor Jen Martin. This workshop aligned perfectly with my personal belief that science should be shared with the public and made accessible to non-scientists. This workshop taught me some useful techniques for structuring a scientific talk as a story that is captivating and easy to follow by a general audience. Following the workshop, I had access to the presentation and other helpful material, which has enabled me to share my learnings with my colleagues in Edinburgh upon my return. I have used the

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

strategies I learnt from this workshop to structure an upcoming presentation for my peers in the Darwin Trust of Edinburgh 2023 symposium.

Overall, I found this conference valuable for progressing my career as a researcher and as an academic. It gave me the opportunity to learn about fields of science that I do not regularly engage with, and to make connections with scientific communities in other countries, through talking to invited speakers and to other PhD students, to learn about their work and their research environment. Lorne Genome conference allowed me to present my work to a wide audience. This conference has given me two unique opportunities; to adapt my presentation to a more general audience in a way that captivated their interest and receive new questions and perspective's on my work that has encouraged me to think about public engagement and future work on my project, and what I would like to do following my PhD.

I am thankful for the experience I gained from attending this conference and I am grateful for the James Rennie Bequest Fund for aiding my attendance.