

ASCEPT Travel Award Report

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I would like to express my gratitude to ASCEPT for providing generous support that allowed me to attend the XXIVth International Symposium on Cerebral Blood Flow, Metabolism and Function & IXth International Conference on Quantification of Brain Function with PET in Chicago, IL, USA from June 29 – July 3.

The meeting attracted key international scientists conducting research in areas including cerebral blood flow, cerebral metabolism and cerebral functions in physiological and pathophysiological states. The stimulating scientific program featured a strong emphasis on cerebral ischemia, my area of research.

Of particular value was the first day of the conference which consisted of Educational Courses involving a number of speakers and topics. I attended sessions on 'Ischaemia Models' and 'Anaesthesia in Stroke' followed in the afternoon by 'Experimental Design to Publication'. In this session Ulrich Dirnagl highlighted problems in pre-clinical studies that have led to the disappointing results of neuroprotectants in improving the outcome of stroke patients in clinical trials. To try and overcome these problems he outlined important aspects of study design, data analysis and reporting in publications.

Highlights of the scientific program for me included symposiums on neurovascular coupling and cortical spreading depression after brain injury and in particular 'The Role of Prostaglandins in Brain Physiology and Pathology' which is directly relevant to my current research. Especially interesting were talks by Josef Anrather and Francesca Bosetti on the effectors of COX-2-dependent neurotoxicity and the differential roles of COX-1 and COX-2 in neuroinflammation.

I presented my current research on the role of endogenous prostacyclin signalling in protecting the brain after stroke as a poster entitled 'Increased Cortical Infarct after Transient Ischaemic Stroke in Mice Lacking the IP Receptor for Prostacyclin'. I received helpful feedback about my work which along with the symposiums and workshops has given me insights into the field as a whole and guidance on the directions of my own work.

Overall the conference was a very rewarding experience, providing not only invaluable scientific exposure but also social networking opportunities including the conference dinner cruise on Lake Michigan and the chance to enjoy beautiful Chicago. I would like to thank ASCEPT again for making my attendance possible.