

ASCEPT Travel Grant Report

I would firstly like to take this opportunity to thank ASCEPT for their generous support in awarding me an *ASCEPT Travel Award* to help fund my attendance at the *2009 Experimental Biology Conference* in New Orleans, USA. The conference was an invaluable experience which provided me with new insights and directions for my own research and career path.

We arrived in New Orleans on the 16th of April where we needed a day or two to recover from our extensive flight! On Friday the 17th of April we attended the *Ernest N. Morial Convention Centre* in the heart of the CBD to officially register. The conference centre was a lot larger than expected and well facilitated for an international conference such as *EB*. It was only a sign of things to come with the next day being the first official day of the conference.

The next day delegates covered the floors (later I was told up to 10,000 attended) rushing from session to session. Myself and my fellow peers had each highlighted several sessions that we wanted to attend during the course of the day. I was attracted to the '*Career Development*' work-shops which comprised of several speakers who were linked to industrial and bio-tech positions. On the first day I attended a session run by the enigmatic Ron Howard, who was giving us advice on how to network and meet people. I will never forget to 'keep the drinking glass half full' so you always have an excuse to leave a conversation or draw someone else for a top-up! Other sessions I attended included: "*Beyond the Bench...Preparing for Your Career Transition in the Life Sciences*" and "*Interviewing Tips: Winning that Next Job!*"

I was due to present my poster titled: "*Apocynin is not a scavenger of NADPH oxidase in platelets*" on Sunday the 19th of April. After attending a couple of early sessions, I headed to one of the conference halls where I was one of literally a thousand other posters across a wide variety of sciences. I was placed within the '*Coagulation and Thrombosis*' posters situated on the far left of the exhibit hall. I was pleased that when it came for me to present I had a couple of people who were interested in my work. One worked at the University Of Virginia and had also completed work related to NADPH oxidase in platelets. I also spoke to Associate Professor John Kermode whose work involves thromboxane A₂, ADP and their relationship with von Willebrand factor. Here I was able to obtain valuable advice on using aspirin as an inhibitor of cyclooxygenase rather than indomethacin in platelets.

However, the highlight of the conference for me was the symposium titled "*The Evolution of Creationism*." The debate came into fray a few years ago when a Kansas school board voted to adopt new science standards casting a doubt on Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. In addition voters in Dover, Pennsylvania decided that the school board would back a statement requiring intelligent design be taught in classrooms. Later on that year federal judge, John E Jones, gave the historic verdict that "Intelligent design is not science" and "the schools' district promotion of it violates the constitution." Judge Jones unfortunately could not attend but we heard excerpts from him to get an idea of his persona. Several other speakers then presented their arguments against the intelligent design theory. It was certainly very interesting and enough to stir a debate even amongst the most conservative!

I also attended several other sessions relating to my work which included: "*Modulation of Endothelial Function by NADPH Oxidase*" and "*Regulation of Leukocyte Migration and Activation in Models of Inflammation*."

All in all attending the Experimental Biology conference was a great experience for me. Not only was I able to gain insights into my research but also career advice as well. In addition, I was able to network with several other delegates and exchange ideas which I was encouraged to do before attending. Of course the conference being held in a cultural city full of life such as New Orleans was a bonus and an experience I will always remember. Once again thank you ASCEPT for giving me the opportunity to attend such a conference!