

# **Report for Travel Support Received to Attend IUPHAR 2006 in Beijing, China.**

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They don't do things by halves in China, appropriate for a country that is gearing up to host the 2008 Olympic Games. A sense of occasion was certainly evident at the Opening Ceremony of IUPHAR's 15<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Pharmacology. Ten dignitaries welcomed the 2000-strong audience to Beijing, followed by a cultural performance of traditional Chinese music, Peking Opera, kung fu and acrobatics. My first highlight came from this performance, where 50 nervous local post-graduate students filed onto stage to sing two welcome songs in English. Pharmacology was clearly their day job, yet they cheerfully and gallantly welcomed us to the start of a truly fabulous international scientific event. I just hope that Australian pharmacology students are never called upon to reciprocate the welcome, as I fear we would not achieve equivalent dignity.

My second highlight was the excellent session on G protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs) held on Monday afternoon. Chaired by international GPCR authority, Professor Graeme Milligan, the stellar line-up commanded a full auditorium and lively debate as they discussed the latest theories and highlights in GPCR pharmacology. Australia and ASCEPT was well represented by Professor Arthur Christopoulos, who outlined his laboratory's most recent findings regarding allosteric regulation of GPCRs. I particularly enjoyed hearing the latest molecular probes and biosensors that have been developed to examine the multi-protein complexes assembled at the GPCR interface, delivered by Professors Martin Lohse and Milligan.

Some speakers failed to make their sessions due to various reasons, most notably gastroenteritis, which seemed to affect many visitors to the conference. Appropriately for a group of pharmacologists, medications are available over-the-counter in China – but you need to know what you are after. In my friend's case, a simple request for a treatment for fever (she didn't ask for paracetamol specifically) resulted in a pack of small traditional medicinals called "Dripping Pills". IUPHAR 2006 would prove to enhance our pharmacology both within and outside the conference centre.

I would like to thank ASCEPT for the very generous provision of travel support, without which I would not have been able to attend IUPHAR. Additionally, my thanks are extended to IUPHAR and the Chinese Pharmacological Society for an enjoyable Congress.