

ASCEPT TRAVEL GRANT REPORT

Dr Ruth Hannan

With the assistance of an ASCEPT – IUPHAR Travel Grant, I was recently able to attend and present at the 15th World Congress of Pharmacology (IUPHAR, July 2 – 7, 2006) in Beijing, and one of its satellite meetings, the 11th International Vascular Neuroeffector Mechanisms and Cardiovascular Pharmacology and Medicine Symposia, which was held in Shanghai-Suzhou, Jiangsu province (27 – 29 June, 2006).

Described as “the Venice of the East” with its abundance of canals, the ancient city of Suzhou provided an idyllic setting for the Vascular Neuroeffector Mechanisms satellite meeting, which focussed on recent advances in vascular research. The Third Asian Lecture on Vascular Biology, given by Dr Yuangsheng Gao (China), was particularly informative in this regard, as the involvement of protein kinase G-dependent mechanisms in the development of nitrate tolerance in coronary vessels was discussed. The deleterious effects of oxidative stress on cardiovascular function also provided a major focus of the satellite meeting. In a couple of sessions, certain endothelium-dependent vasodilator mechanisms (specifically, endothelium-derived hyperpolarising factor and the cytochrome P-450 pathway) were reviewed succinctly by Dr Michel Feletou (France) and Dr Ingrid Fleming (Germany), respectively, and were considered in the context of potential therapeutic drug targets. From a personal perspective I found these seminars to be most beneficial, as this area is of direct relevance to my research interests (vasodilatation and contraction mechanisms in the microvasculature, and how these mechanisms are impaired in disease states such as Type 2 diabetes). I was also fortunate enough to receive a Trends in Pharmacological Science prize at this meeting, for my poster entitled, “Differential mechanisms account for EDHF-dependent vasodilatation in the microvasculature of lean and obese Zucker rats”.

The calibre and magnitude of the scientific program on offer at IUPHAR, Beijing, attracted a great number of internationally-acclaimed scientists, including IUPHAR president, Professor Paul Vanhoutte (Hong Kong), who gave a most comprehensive plenary lecture on endothelial function and vascular disease, and offered interesting insights into the emerging role of endothelial-derived contracting factors in the development of endothelial dysfunction. The vast number of delegates present made for extensive poster-viewing sessions: the Diabetes, Metabolism, Endocrine Pharmacology poster session alone featured 95 posters. I appreciated the opportunity afforded by such a conference to share and discuss research ideas with experts in my field (Dr Erik Thorin – Canada, amongst others), and to gain insights into aspects of clinical research and management of hypertensive patients through meeting local epidemiologists such as Chris Reid (Monash University). The oral sessions were of an excellent standard, and many were of immediate relevance to my research (in particular, the session entitled: “Vascular complications of diabetes – is targeting the endothelium a viable option for new treatments?”, in which the role of oxidative stress in diabetic vascular complications was a recurring theme). I thought that the amount of interest shown by delegates in the forthcoming ASCEPT – SEAWP 2007 meeting in Adelaide was most encouraging – thanks in part to the very effective promotional material; I don't think there was a single person without a kangaroo and/or koala protruding from their name badge by the end of the conference! From a tourist perspective, a visit to Beijing is of course not complete without a visit to the Great Wall. This was certainly a highlight of the trip; I can confirm that the wall is indeed great, magnificent in fact!

In summary, I benefited greatly from attending two very productive and successful scientific meetings, and I would like to thank the Society for its generous financial contribution towards my travels.