

ASCEPT IUPHAR Travel Award Report 2010

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I would like to express my sincere thanks to ASCEPT for their generous support which allowed me to attend the 16th IUPHAR World Congress of Basic and Clinical Pharmacology in Copenhagen, July 17th - 23rd.

The congress featured numerous focus group conferences, several which were of relevance to my own research and of general interest. The program also featured multiple highly regarded scientists in the field of stem cell therapy for the heart, my area of research.

One highlight of the congress for me was the Cell Therapy Plenary Lecture given by Dr. Stephanie Dimmeler. In this session, she highlighted problems pertaining to cell survival which largely limits the success of cell therapy for cardiac repair. She discussed proven and newer approaches to try and overcome cell death, including targeting microRNAs. This was of particular value to me as my research focuses on improving the survival of stem cells for cardiac tissue engineering applications. She also covered the current state of clinical trials in this field.

I presented my own research on the role of hypoxia in stem cell protection during the 'Heart Gone Wrong: Treatment options for diastolic heart failure' session. My presentation was entitled, 'Hypoxic preconditioning improves survival of human adipose-derived stem cells for cardiac tissue engineering'. I received some very valuable feedback, particularly into a part of my work which I was previously unable to explain.

Following the conference, I visited Professor Mummery's laboratory at Leiden University Medical Centre in the Netherlands. There, they are investigating induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells to develop disease models for drug screening. This visit was incredibly interesting and I learnt a lot about iPS cells which was exciting.

Overall, the conference and lab visits were extremely valuable and rewarding. They provided both important scientific exposure as well as networking opportunities. Again, I would like to sincerely thank ASCEPT for their generous support in ensuring these fantastic opportunities were not missed!