

The Matrix Metalloproteinase Gordon Research Conference held in Tuscany this year was an eye-opening experience for me as a 2nd year PhD student. It is difficult to comprehend the extent of the amazing research and the amount of dedicated scientists out there until we attend an international conference and see what is new and exciting in the field. It was a surreal experience meeting scientists that I always see the name of when I read their papers, but all the senior scientists were down-to-earth and encouraging towards the students. Meeting other PhD students from around the world was a fantastic experience to get some different perspectives and to share ideas with in a relaxed environment. Presenting my own work to the entire audience was a nerve-wracking experience but also the most rewarding, it was worth it to get some great feedback and encouragement. It has given me more confidence with presenting and generally being more curious and asking questions. I liked discussing my work further with people one-on-one in the poster sessions which enabled more in-depth discussions. I also enjoyed seeing what new therapies and technologies are out there at the moment; this information is sometimes not readily available which made it very interesting. Something I noticed more than anything was how everyone there was so passionate about science which made the experience so worthwhile for me.