

My highlights of PPCTSS 2013 (Hong Kong, 24-27 Nov 2013)

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I had the great pleasure of participating in the 9th Pan Pacific Connective Tissue Societies Symposium recently held in Hong Kong, where I presented my ongoing work. The programme covered a wide variety of extracellular matrix biology themes including the ECM in development/disease, cell-ECM interactions, mechanobiology and ECM homeostasis.

Being my first trip to the city I was struck by its scale, surprised by the proximity of wide expanses of countryside to the main city, and particularly impressed by the setting for our opening plenary lectures – I can't think of a better view from a lab than from the Hong Kong Jockey Club Building for Interdisciplinary Research.

Among the (many) highlights for me personally were the presentations by Chris Overall, who outlined some surprising (and rigorously validated) findings of beneficial MMP roles in inflammation, along with Hal Dietz's excellently presented talk, where he described the remarkable advances that his lab have contributed to our understanding of the pathogenesis/treatment of marfan syndrome.

The atmosphere of the conference was welcoming to researchers at all career stages, and I was glad to be able to chat to both junior and senior delegates during breaks and at the conference dinner, where we were treated to some fantastic Cantonese food.

I found it a valuable experience to meet and hear from researchers from the Pan-Pacific region, the vast majority of whom I had never had the opportunity to see present. I am grateful to the ISMB for their support, and I would highly recommend that other scientists consider attending the next PPCTSS meeting, planned to take place in South Korea.