

**REPORT ON ATTENDING THE GORDON RESEARCH CONFERENCE & SEMINAR ON
PROTEOGLYCANS, ANDOVER NH, U.S.A. [JULY 05-11, 2014]**

My position as a postdoctoral fellow with Umesh Desai's group at Virginia Commonwealth University enabled my foray into the proteoglycans arena and my subsequent attendance at the related Gordon Research Conference (GRC) and Seminar (GRS) in 2014. This was my first GRC and I found it lived up to expectations. There have been few instances when I felt intrigued by a conference even AFTER it had already ended. The science was at the cutting edge, which allowed me to gain a perspective on current challenges in the field. Being from a computational background, I found there are several areas I could contribute to. In hindsight, this made it all the more important that I attended this meeting.

One observation I made was the diversity amongst attendees at this meeting. A large number of participants were from various European countries, including Germany, Italy, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and the UK. We also had people from Australia, Japan and China. There were biologists, chemists and computational chemists among us. We heard several excellent talks by stalwarts in the field, but I would like to lay focus on a few presentations by younger researchers that were personally intriguing to me. Elisa Migliorini from Grenoble, who won an ISMB Young Scientist Award for her work, presented a very interesting technique that measures the biomechanical effects of glycosaminoglycan-protein interactions in the cellular matrix. This was my first experience of the technique and it parallels quite well with my work. Also, presentations on biomaterials (Brooke Farrugia, University of New South Wales), nanotechnology (Mausam Kalita, University of Utah), stem cell migration (Becky Holley, University of Manchester), processing of decorin (Ute Pickhinke, University of Kiel), autophagy in the endothelial cells and mitophagy in breast cancer (Annabel Torres & Tom Neill respectively, Thomas Jefferson University) also deserve special mention.

My research focusses on understanding the role of water in glycosaminoglycan-protein interactions. I was glad to see many demonstrate an interest in my views. While their approval was flattering, in-depth discussions with them also helped me evaluate my results in better light and estimate its true worth in the field. We are currently in the process of finalizing our manuscript by incorporating suggestions from fellow attendees and hence I must extend my sincerest gratitude to them.

Proteoglycans is a very diverse and difficult area of research, which incorporates such a varied range of techniques, it is not possible for any one laboratory to be self-sufficient in all of them. Thus, collaborative efforts are essential. Such partnerships are key to meaningful research in today's world – it is no longer possible for segregated laboratories to perform self-contained work and still be relevant on a global scale. Relevance is, obviously, the sacrosanct requirement for funding by any agency across the globe. Despite limited experience in proteoglycans, I can safely say this is one area that truly possesses the essence of collaborative research, and that the Gordon Research Conference/Seminar serves as a great platform to facilitate the same. Barring any untoward incidences, I will definitely attend again in 2016.