

Gordon research seminar and conference: Proteoglycans

Andover, New Hampshire, USA, July 2016

Firstly, I would like to thank the International Society of Matrix Biology for providing me with the opportunity to attend the GRS/GRC Proteoglycans. I am a PhD student working in the lab of Dada Pisconti from the University of Liverpool and my project aims to understand how the proteoglycan syndecan-3 signals in myogenesis. This was my first GRS/GRC and my first international conference in the U.S. From the beginning the atmosphere was incredibly friendly and sociable from both the staff and attendees. The mix of PhD students, post docs, younger and more senior investigators served the conference well in terms of the breadth of research presented.

The GRS was prior to the GRC and served as a useful platform for PhD students and postdocs to interact on a professional and social level. Everyone actively participated in the discussion of the talks by asking questions and giving feedback which was a great way to improve confidence before the other researchers arrived. Tabea Dierker from Sweden did a fantastic job organising the event and encouraging everyone to interact by presenting a poster, chairing a session or giving a talk. Aside from presenting research there were some insightful talks from senior investigators such as Jeff Esko who gave a talk on being 'mensch at the bench'.

The main conference started soon after the GRS ended and started off with late-breaking topics. The data presented was novel and insightful. In particular we were lucky enough to hear Randy Shekman, a noble laureate, discuss vesicular transport and membrane assembly. Of particular relevance to me were the sessions on musculoskeletal biology and disease, technological advances and cell signalling and trafficking. From these sessions I took away a great deal of knowledge, specifically new techniques to experiment with and fresh ideas for my project. I was also selected to give a teaser talk with the aim of promoting my poster which was a fantastic idea and gave me confidence in presenting in front of many people.

Interaction with all researchers was actively encouraged. This was evident during all of the poster sessions, evening and day activities. Posters sessions ran for four days and lasted two hours, allowing ample time for me to visit many presenters and present my own poster. During this time I met a number of individuals who were interested in my work and consequently we had a great discussion on my results and what direction I am planning to take. Day time activities were scheduled which was another period for socialisation to discuss science and non-science issues.

Overall I thoroughly enjoyed the GRS/GRC Proteoglycans. I met many scientists in differing stages of their careers and since then we have been in contact to share ideas and skills. The experience I gained during the conference improved my confidence, networking and expanded my knowledge. I hope to attend again in the future.

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