

In June 2016, I had the honour of receiving the International Society for Matrix Biology (ISMB) travel grant to attend the Matrix Biology Europe meeting held in Athens, Greece. This conference is organised by ISMB and is recognised as the most important Matrix Biology conference in Europe. The work that was presented at this conference covered topics ranging from the role of proteoglycans, collagen modifications, cell-matrix interactions to applications in tissue engineering.

My PhD project is focused on generating a sophisticated model of the multiple integrin-based interactions between human fibroblasts and tropoelastin. Understanding this interaction teaches us about the molecular interface between elastic tissue and cells, and allows us to develop strategies to improve wound repair and promote soft tissue integration of biodevices. Therefore, the conference not only gave me insight into the current understanding of cell-matrix interactions, but also allowed me to foster collaborations with pioneers in the field to contribute to the bigger picture.

With the crucial help of this grant, I was able to travel to Greece from Australia to give a talk on my recent work. Additionally, this attendance and participation allowed me to receive the Excellence in Matrix Biology Award, which was selected and judged by a panel from the Matrix Biology journal, Elsevier.

Attending the conference was an extremely rewarded experience. I would like to extend my gratitude to the organisers of this conference for granting me the funding to contribute to this fascinating field of research. The recognition upon receiving this award is a great honour and has given me an opportunity to foster ties that are crucial to my academic career.

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