

MBE 2016 Athens Meeting Perspective

First, I need to thank Nikos Karamanos for inviting me to speak at the MBE 2016 meeting and to congratulate him for doing such a superb job in organizing the meeting. The venue was beautiful. The science was stimulating. Athens was exciting with so much to explore and great food! I really appreciated the guided tour of the Acropolis museum that the meeting arranged.

I arrived in Athens after speaking at a FASEB meeting in Colorado, USA, which was a bit of a culture shock to be honest. I had never attended a meeting outside of North America and was surprised by how formal the atmosphere of the meeting was. There were men in suits...with ties!! This is uncommon at meetings in the USA and Canada unless the audience is primarily medical doctors. I also found it rather challenging to break in socially the first day and start conversations with people. It felt a little like a close-knit club.

Regarding the format of the meeting, I would have preferred to have the meeting run a day longer and only have one session running at a time. It was so difficult to choose which workshops to attend. I hated missing out on 1/3 of the talks because of the parallel workshops. I was learning so much in every session. There were also chronic audio-visual issues in the Attica room that necessitated cutting out question time after many of the presentations to be able to keep to the schedule. While I understand the need for this, I would have appreciated more time for questions and discussions.

The science presented at the meeting was top notch, very translational in focus, and some of the techniques that people are using just blew me away. I came away with a note pad full of ideas and the names of several potential future collaborators. It was also nice to get so much positive feedback on my presentation.

For me, the highlight of the meeting was the taverna dinner for the invited speakers. The food was excellent, the wine plentiful, and the conversation lively. I had the pleasure of sitting with some really fun people. We were the first to join the Greek contingent once the dancing started!! I was one of the first to leave at 23:00. After this night, conversations at the meeting came more easily. I felt as though I had broken the ice and started to be part of the club.