

ISMB travel grant 2018

Short Report

I am a third year PhD student in the lab of Professor Alberto Passi at the Università degli Studi dell'Insubria of Varese (Italy). Matrix biology is the focus of my research group. We are interested in the involvement of hyaluronan and syndecans in the atherosclerosis disease because on them depend the matrix reorganization happening during the onset of the atherosclerotic plaque.

I was really honoured that ISMB awarded me a travel grant because it facilitated my attendance at the Matrix Biology Europe 2018 congress that took place on 21-24 July 2018 in Manchester, UK.

MBE is the most important European conference dealing with Matrix Biology. I participated for the first in Athens in 2016 and I was very excited to attend the conference for a second time because it would have been an unmissable opportunity to hear about the most exciting and new aspects of the research performed on the extracellular matrix. During the congress I had the possibility to follow very interesting plenary sessions and to choose the workshops more related to my research topic.

On this occasion I presented a poster on the role of PCSK9 (a new therapeutic target for atherosclerosis disease) in remodelling of matrix components such as hyaluronan and syndecan in vascular cells. I had very interesting discussions about this. Furthermore, it was the occasion to discuss with the greatest connoisseurs about the role of proteoglycans in endothelial permeability and the hyaluronan modifications during inflammation, which are the topics of my thesis project.

During the meeting we also celebrated the 50 years of Federation of European Connective Tissue Societies (FECTS) foundation and the first meeting held in Cambridge, UK (June 30th to July 2nd, 1968). The celebration took place in the Manchester Museum where John Couchman gave a beautiful and fascinating talk in an amazing location.

MBE 2018 gathered together world-class speakers with young scientists. The days were very full of sessions, but I had time for visiting the city of Manchester with other PhD students like me. This social aspect is important in a meeting because it gave me the opportunity to enjoy the free time and to create contacts with colleagues in a less formal manner.

To conclude, the congress expanded my knowledge on matrix biology, allowed me to search collaborations and gave me enthusiasm for future working perspectives.

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