JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION / PROJECT / CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/ Conference Title: European Summer School on Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine 2019 in Hydra, Greece

Travel Dates: 15th – 22nd September 2019

Location: Hydra, Greece

Group member(s): Matúš Vojtek

Aims: Present my PhD work, learn more about stem cell biology and network with other scientists

Photography consent form attached: *(please refer to your award letter)*

☐ Yes
☒ No

OUTCOME (a minimum of 500 words):-

The European Summer School on Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine, also known as Hydra summer school, took place on a Greek island Hydra from 15th to 22nd September 2019.The aim of the Hydra summer school is to educate the future generation of stem cell biologists.

In a course of a week, sixteen experts in the fields of stem cell biology and regenerative medicine introduced fundamental concepts of stem cell biology, terminology, landmark discoveries, current state of the field and future perspectives. The first part of the summer school was focused on the origins of pluripotency and emergence of embryonic stem cells during early embryo development. The second part focused on adult stem cells and tissue homeostasis. The final part of the school focused on applications of stem cell biology in regenerative medicine and cancer treatment.

One of the main aspects of the summer school was scientific discussion. During dedicated sessions we discussed terminology used in the stem cell biology field, fraudulent companies abusing stem cell branding, ethical implications of stem cell biology and regenerative medicine and policies regarding stem cell applications. This helped to clear possible misconceptions in the field and to reach a consensus in the used definitions and terminology. Invited experts in public engagement gave multiple lectures and seminars to improve our communication skills with general public and educated us on how to address common disinformation among general public. This summer school was also unique because it created a perfect environment to interact with both students and senior researchers during extracurricular activities which is not common for standard conferences. Such environment helped me to introduce myself to several influential scientist and to build professional relationships with many participants.

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Participants also presented their work in a form of a poster. Poster sessions were divided into five sections which provided enough time for participants and faculty members to discuss and evaluate each poster in a detail. I presented my work *“Nanog direct the core transcriptional complex to regulate ESC self-renewal”* in the last poster session. My poster attracted a fair amount of interest from fellow students and faculty members from the field. This helped me to improve my presentation skills and to communicate the results of my research better.

Attending the European Summer School on Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine was beneficial to me in many aspects. Firstly, I discussed my topic of research in a detail with world experts in the field and get feedback on my research project. All the feedback I have received helps me to prepare for my upcoming viva. Secondly, I learned about intestinal, neural and muscle stem cell biology which I knew very little about before the conference. Thirdly, I met many young scientists and introduced myself to several principal investigators. I believe these contacts will benefit my career perspectives in academia and allow me to establish scientific collaborations in future. Finally, meeting my scientific heroes in person, learning about incredible advances in stem cell biology and seeing astonishing achievements in eyesight and skin regeneration was extremely inspiring to me. I am grateful to James Rennie bequest for the opportunity to participate at such educative summer school.