

## **American Academy of Dermatology Registration Scholarship – 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

Ashley Spencer

I was very fortunate to receive the AAD Registration Scholarship, which has enabled me to attend this year's conference at the Walter E Washington Convention Centre in Washington DC. This was the first time I had ever been to an AAD conference, and I found the sheer scale of the event and quality of the talks incredible.

I have an interest in the cutaneous manifestations of systemic autoimmune disease, and planned my attendance at sessions accordingly. Particularly impressive speakers were Drs Ruth Ann Vleugels and Alisa Fernia who both spoke on dermatomyositis, and Dr Robert Micheletti who gave an overview of vasculitis. Dr Vleugels presented a selection of cases which perfectly illustrated many pitfalls in the prompt recognition of dermatomyositis, and discussed her approach to investigations. Dr Fernia also described cases with excellent learning points, and explained the clinical significance of different autoantibodies present and how this can guide management. Dr Micheletti provided a memorable illustration of the different cutaneous signs of vasculitis in relation to the underlying pathology, as well as example cases of important vasculitis mimics that are not to be missed. I now feel so much better equipped to be able to make an accurate diagnosis of vasculitis and form a differential for the underlying cause.

On Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> March, the BAD held their 8<sup>th</sup> Annual British Dermatology Reunion at the AAD, and this was held at the Marriott Marquis Hotel. This proved a great opportunity to network with fellow UK dermatologists, and was a very enjoyable evening. During the conference, I also found speaking to the American residents (equivalent of registrars in the UK) about their training very interesting; they certainly have a lot more protected time dedicated to their training and development in comparison to the UK system, and have considerably longer appointments with their patients. However, it was also clear from listening to the speakers that gaining medical insurance approval for important treatments for their patients can be very difficult and time consuming. One presentation in particular comes to mind in which a case of calciphylaxis was discussed; despite the high mortality associated with this diagnosis, funding for sodium thiosulfate was not approved even though it is an important and mainstream treatment, and one that we are able to access easily in the NHS.

I also spent a day soaking up the sights of Washington DC and particularly enjoyed the walk through the Memorial Parks and National Mall; this encompassed the Jefferson, Lincoln and World War II Memorials, White House, Washington Monument and Capitol Building.

I would like to thank the BAD and AAD for supporting me to attend this prestigious meeting. I had a very enjoyable experience and learned so many useful and interesting things. I am grateful that my eyes have been opened to the calibre of this meeting and the learning opportunities it presents at such an early stage in my career - certainly I will be adding the AAD conference to my calendar from now on!

