

## **BAD/DC Travel Fellowship Report - Society for Melanoma Research Congress, San Francisco, 18-21 November 2015**

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I have attended the Society for Melanoma Research annual meeting in San Francisco which was held between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 2015. Attending the meeting was an extremely valuable experience. The first day of the meeting was dedicated to skin cancer dermatopathology. A number of fantastic talks were presented on the day. The most memorable one was from Professor Claire Lugassy who presented a model for melanoma metastases introducing angiotropism and extravascular migratory metastasis using the vessel-associated pericytes in order to spread to distant sites. The second and third day consisted of a number of thought provoking presentations mainly focused on tumour immunotherapy, anti-PD1 clinical trials results and biomarkers for anti-PD-1 resistance. Presentations from other medical specialties including an exciting talk from professor Joshua Brody a haematology professor based in Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York highlighted the similarity in cancer-utilised pathways in a number of different malignancies. The last day of the meeting was dedicated to uveal melanoma with a number of exciting talks presented. Professor Jackie Lees from MIT gave an excellent presentation demonstrating the role of in vivo studies using zebrafish as a model in uveal melanoma. Professor William Harbour gave an insight into tumour and patient related characteristics of uveal melanoma and their impact on prognosis. Finally the women in science part of the meeting hosted a truly inspiring talk by one of the most influential female scientist in breast cancer research, Mina Bissell. Her talk included some highlights from her very successful academic career but also demonstrated how perseverance and determination could lead to a successful and fulfilling personal and professional life. Truly inspiring!

The meeting also gave me the opportunity to present my data to date. My poster attracted a number of interested researchers and stimulated vivid discussions and debate, which gave me some ideas for future work and opened the door for possible future collaborations. This meeting also gave me the opportunity to network with experts in the field like Professor Bertil Damato, one of the world experts in ocular oncology and uveal melanoma. Apart from the scientific programme, visiting San Francisco was a unique experience. I will always remember the bike ride across the golden gate bridge to Sausalito and the boat tour to Alcatraz. The weather was on our side and we have exploited every hour out of the conference hall with walks in golden gate park and the very famous San Francisco Chinatown. Overall, my trip to San Francisco was an excellent experience and I would like to thank the BAD for supporting me to attend this exciting and educational meeting.