

BAD/DC Travel Fellowship - Summer 2017

AAD Fellowship report: Dr Sarah Mehrstens

I am very grateful to the BAD for awarding me this travel fellowship to attend the annual AAD meeting in San Diego, February 2018. It was my first time at the meeting and I was extremely impressed by the packed scientific programme with a vast array of interesting speakers and talks.

The majority of sessions were focused on topics relevant to the practicing dermatologist, full of research updates and clinical pearls. It was fascinating learning about how International dermatologists have different approaches to treating common conditions. I found the update sessions on melasma, vitiligo, psoriasis, pregnancy dermatoses and alopecia extremely helpful and interesting.

I particularly enjoyed the 'Translating evidence into practice' session on acne and 'Treating severe skin disease in children', with many take-home messages that will change my clinical practice. The session on 'Complex Medical Dermatology' was also of a very high quality. Benjamin Chong provided a fantastic overview on cutaneous lupus, highlighting the benefit of dapsone for bullous lupus, high dose hydroxychloroquine for acute and tumid subtypes, and lenalidomide as a promising treatment for refractory lupus rather than thalidomide, as peripheral neuropathy is not a side effect.

The Sunday morning plenary session was worth waking up for. I felt inspired after talks by Dr Jan Vilcek on developing Infliximab as a TNF inhibitor and Prof Jennifer Doudna on developing CRISPR genome editing. Dr Abraham Verghese had the audience captivated by his inspiring talk as guest speaker on burnout and wellness in medicine.

I had the opportunity to present a rare case to an international audience at the Gross and Microscopic Symposium session on Friday. This was well received and I also enjoyed listening to other speakers, mainly Dermatology Residents from the US, presenting interesting short dermatology cases with histology discussion.

The conference was located in the cultural hub of San Diego, surrounded by fine restaurants and harbour-side bars. It was very sociable with events going on every evening, providing the perfect opportunity to enjoy delicious local food and meet with dermatologists from around the world. Watching the sunset over the harbour enjoying California roll sushi with new Dermatology friends was a highlight.

Overall it was a fantastic trip and I left San Diego full of inspiration and interest. I would encourage all trainees to attend the AAD meeting and I hope to attend as many as I can in the future!

