

**Matthew Brook**

**Keystone Symposium “Maternal-Fetal Crosstalk: Harmony vs. Conflict”**

Thanks to a SRF Travel Grant, I attended a Keystone Symposium in Washington DC entitled “Maternal-Fetal Crosstalk: Harmony vs. Conflict”. This was the first such meeting, in that it brought together basic scientists that study the molecular and cellular processes underpinning successful pregnancy (from the perspective of both the mother and the fetus), population geneticists that aim to identify genomic and epigenomic causes/associations of adverse pregnancy outcomes, and clinicians that currently treat/manage pregnancy complications and whom are looking for new/better ways to do so. Further, in the spirit of the ethos of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, who co-funded the meeting, the participants included many from the areas of the world that are most affected by devastating issues such as stillbirth and preeclampsia. Altogether, this created a fantastic environment for cross-disciplinary knowledge exchange and for the formation of new collaborative ventures.

I was fortunate enough to be selected to give an oral presentation. Although, giving my first ever talk at a pregnancy-related conference, to a room packed with world-leaders in the field, made the experience far more daunting than any talk I have previously given. A definite baptism of fire! However, it was their feedback on our work that I wanted, and I was able to interact with many delegates that had excellent advice/opinion to offer and I returned from the meeting with new experiments planned and reassurance that it was time to start writing up the work for (hopefully) publication. I thank the SRF for this fantastic opportunity.