

SRF Travel Grant Report: Michelle Johnson

Society for the Study of Reproduction (SSR) 46th annual meeting 22nd – 26th July 2013, Montreal, Canada 'Reproductive health: nano to global'

Thanks to SRF support, I was able to attend the Society for the Study of Reproduction (SSR) annual meeting in Montreal this year (2013). This was my first attendance at a large international meeting and I presented my poster entitled 'increased glucagon-like peptide-1 concentration in rat descending colon during proestrus is associated with decreased food intake at estrus'.

Thanks to the broad theme of the meeting, I was able to discuss my work with many like-minded researchers that I would not have the opportunity to meet at UK meetings, and gain insight into their ongoing work. There were many research groups in attendance whose work focussed on similar aspects to my own and I was able to discuss specific scientific methodologies, such as sample preparation, which proved to be beneficial to both parties. I particularly benefited from the ability to network with Dr Brenda Alexander, who is part of the Larson-Meyer research group at the University of Wyoming, and with a PhD student working with Laura Schulz (University of Missouri). In addition to this, the ability to continue networking with Adam Watkins (SRF New Investigator) allowed me to invite him to The Open University to give a seminar to my department.

There were multiple sessions I found especially useful, such as 'epigenetic reprogramming in gametes and embryos'. As my work is focussed more on what effects may be seen postpartum, it was a great opportunity to keep up to date on the studies underway to explore the periconceptual and peripartum influences.

As part of this conference, I attended the trainee-mentor luncheon, which allowed a more personal discussion of my work with other postgraduate researchers and the mentor, Dr Bruce Murphy from McGill University, Montreal. I also had the opportunity to attend a trainee forum, which covered everything from tips on searching and applying for your first job to more specific aspects, such as the different career options available for reproductive biologists. As I am currently nearing the end of my PhD, I found the trainee forum to be very useful and informative, as well as an inspirational end to the conference. Thanks to the SRF travel grant, I was able to begin writing my thesis with an extra dose of enthusiasm for what my future career may hold.