

The CTR Annual Trophoblast Meeting and Placental Biology course, 2013

The CTR (Centre for Trophoblast Research) Annual Trophoblast Meeting took place in picturesque Cambridge, where this excellent centre is based, over one and a half days (8th-9th July) at Clare college. This meeting is aimed at basic scientists and academic clinicians with an interest in pregnancy research. The first day was a day of presentations selected from delegate submissions and included some great talks such as 'Strong inhibition of maternal NK cells by paternal MHC results in compromised reproduction fitness' by Jens Kieckbusch from University of Cambridge, 'Paternal dominance of imprinted genes in the equid placenta' by Doug Antczak from Cornell University. A talk that probably got everyone's attention due to its unusualness was 'Placentation in the Giraffe, zebra and wildebees' given by Twin Allen from The Paul Mellon Laboratory. The second day of the conference was a themed day and focused on 'Exosomes and placental-maternal signalling' as there is increasing evidence that this pathway may mediate important aspects of pregnancy. The day kicked off with an introduction to exosomes by Michel Record from France, currently the leading country of this field. This was followed by talks about exosomes and pregnancy such as 'Exosomes as carriers of placental-specific micro-RNAs' by Toshiro Takizawa from Nippon Medical School and 'Exosomes and immunomodulation in pregnancy' by Ian Sargent from University of Oxford.

Prior to the meeting, I also attended a Placental Biology Course organised by the Centre for Trophoblast research as my PhD project revolves around a rodent phenotype that is closely linked to a dysfunctional placenta. It is a long week course that is a mix of lectures and practical lab work. The placenta is covered from a wide variety of angles as seminars are given by people ranging from immunologist to pathologists, and those specialising in evolution, genetics and epigenetics. The course is quite intense at times but incredibly enjoyable as the seminars are being delivered by researchers who are at the top of their field and extremely passionate about what they do. I left Cambridge inspired with new insights into the biology of the placenta and plenty of ideas for my own research. I would recommend the meeting and course to anyone whose research is related to the placenta and is looking to guide their research in the right direction with the right contacts.

Finally, would like to thank the SRF for awarding me with a travel grant which made it possible for me travel to Cambridge to attend the meeting and course.