

# Travellers' tales

Providing grants to attend scientific meetings



Janet Turton took a 5-year break after her PhD to look after her two children. She returned to science recently on a 2-year Daphne Jackson Trust fellowship (sponsored by SmithKline Beecham), and used a Biochemical Society travel grant to attend the Programmed Cell Death Conference at Cold Spring Harbour.

“The conference was re-scheduled to 9–13 November, as it was supposed to go ahead the week after 11 September” says Janet. “I flew from Manchester airport to JFK in New York, and stayed at the Hilton — a special bus was provided to take delegates to Cold Spring Harbor.”

“The conference was ideal for me, as I did my initial training in plant biochemistry, and needed a good overview of apoptosis. The Daphne Jackson Trust specifically provide retraining funds for women returning to science after career breaks. Being at Cold Spring Harbor meant that I could listen to and meet key workers in the field.”

Janet presented a poster at the meeting entitled ‘Isolation of an apoptosis suppressing cDNA sequence using functional expression cloning’. The aim of her research is to go on a gene hunt — looking for novel genes that suppress apoptosis. “The technique involves using a cDNA library derived from mouse haemopoietic cells,” explains Janet. “This library is expressed within a murine retroviral vector, which was used to infect mouse thymoma cells. These cells were stimulated

to undergo apoptosis and we could select the survivors that were resistant. If we do this for a second time, we can be sure it isn't a spontaneous mutation that is responsible.

“We identified several cDNAs that confer resistance, and have been working on a specific one called JOP. It has 980bp and a predicted amino acid length of 112. Analysing the protein database has shown us that the protein shows 100% homology to a protein described by a group from Cambridge that they have called Onzin, which is a Dutch word meaning ‘nonsense’!

“The next stage, which is what I'm now working on, is to sub-clone this gene into a mammalian expression vector and transfect mouse and human cell lines. In this way, we can perform function studies on the protein.

“The protein also shows a slight homology to a region within inhibitor of apoptosis proteins called the BIR3 repeat, and it would be interesting if JOP belonged to that group.

“We had lots of interest in the method used and that was great because it is a nice, tidy method,” concludes Janet.

## Guidelines for Applications

The rules and regulations for applying for a Travel Grant are strict and can be viewed in full at [www.biochemistry.org](http://www.biochemistry.org) where you can also obtain an application form. The main points are listed here for your information:

1. The Travel Grants Committee meets six times a year with closing dates for applications of 1st January, 1st March, 1st May, 1st July, 1st September and 1st November. Applications received after these closing dates will not be considered. Furthermore, applications should be for meetings or visits which take place at least one month after a particular closing date.
2. One original plus four photocopies of a completed application with enclosures should be submitted by post to Alison McWhinnie, Assistant Director, Personnel and Administration, The Biochemical Society, 59 Portland Place, London W1B 1QW. All parts of the form should be completed — if necessary writing “not applicable” for some sections. Applicants must be able to demonstrate that the most cost-effective form of transport and accommodation is to be utilized. Faxed and e-mail applications will not be accepted.
3. New members may apply for their first Travel Grant after they have been a member of the British Biochemical Society for 1 year by the relevant closing date, although applicants will not be eligible if they have been awarded a Student Travel Grant within the last year. Furthermore, applicants will not be eligible if they have been awarded a Travel Grant from the Society during the previous 2 years.
4. Applications which do not comply with the full set of guidelines will not be considered.

For more information about travel grants visit:  
[www.biochemistry.org](http://www.biochemistry.org)