

Joint YLS 2013 report

Andrew Leese (Queen Mary University of London, UK)

The Young Life Scientists' Symposium is an annual scientific conference co-sponsored by the Biochemical Society, the British Pharmacological Society and the Physiological Society. Organized by young scientists for young scientists, the Joint YLS symposia provide a great opportunity for students and early-career postdocs to come together, present their work and network with other scientists in their field. Each symposium focuses on a separate scientific theme, with this year's event, recently hosted at Queen Mary University of London, entitled 'Cardiovascular Medicine: Bridging Basic and Clinical Researchers'. This represents a timely and significant subject, as heart disease continues to be a leading cause of morbidity and mortality across the world, highlighting the need to produce new innovative drugs and improve existing therapies. Effective translational medicine – the process in which discoveries made in the laboratory are applied directly in the clinic – is undoubtedly central to achieving this goal. This requires collaboration across multiple disciplines, a practice the organizing committee were keen to encourage among the next generation of research scientists at this year's symposium. In this light, both basic scientists and clinicians in the field of cardiovascular research were invited to give an oral or

poster presentation with the emphasis of relating their work to the wider context of translational medicine and communicating in a manner that could be easily understood by a diverse research audience.

Indeed, the Joint YLS Symposium 2013 proved to be a massive success, with more than 65 of the 150 registered delegates submitting an abstract for presentation. Both the oral presentation and poster sessions were highly engaging, prompting plentiful questions and lively scientific discussions. This extended to the keynote lectures, given by Professors Ingrid Fleming, Rhian Touyz and Mike Grocott, all of whom kindly shared their pioneering cardiovascular research and interacted superbly with the young delegates. Another highlight of the day's programme was the satellite sessions, which focused on encouraging young scientists to pursue a career in medical research and included advice on how to write a telling CV, as well as a talk by a research advisor from the British Heart Foundation detailing fellowship positions for cardiovascular scientists. The day ended with a fun networking event and evening reception, capping a hugely informative, interactive and enjoyable symposium. ■



YLS Symposium, Bristol, September 2013

Vicky Miller (University of Bristol, UK)

On Monday 9 September, we held our Young Life Scientists' Symposium on 'Molecular Mechanisms of Membrane Dynamics' at the Engineers' House in Clifton, Bristol. Over 70 young scientists from around the UK joined us from as far away as Glasgow to discuss results and share the joys and challenges of life at the bench.

YLS Symposia are one-day scientific conferences run through the Biochemical Society, organized by PhD students and postdocs for their peers. As organizers, we were encouraged to promote networking and professional development through social events and careers sessions, as well as the scientific talks and poster presentations.

The opportunity to get involved in organizing a YLS meeting was something I had long been keen to do. Together with my fellow committee members Dylan Bergen, Sylvie Hunt and David Asante, we started to share ideas. Our proposal really took shape as we designed our ideal conference, the conference that we would want to attend and despite not expecting to be successful we were very happy to receive the good news that our event had been selected.

It was important to us to focus on young scientists and their work as much as possible. With that in mind, we chose to have multiple short talks rather than fewer longer ones. We had 11 talks in total, most at PhD or newly minted postdoc level. These were complemented by our two excellent keynote speakers Dr Catherine Rabouille from Utrecht and Dr Emmanuel Boucrot from UCL. We were also pleased to see huge amounts of activity around the posters at the lunchtime session and much discussion in the coffee breaks. We asked the audience to vote for the prizes

for best talks and best posters which worked very well and people really liked. The only improvement would have been to have had more questions from the younger members of the audience as this was the one area where the few group leaders present dominated.

For our careers sessions, we strongly wanted to provide options that would be of immediate use rather than placing an emphasis on options beyond academia. To that end, we had parallel sessions in the afternoon on the theme 'Finding your voice'; Anne Osterrieder spoke on 'Science, social media and you', Rachel Hackett from Biology Open spoke on how to publish papers, and, most popular of all, Gary Owston from the Old Vic Theatre School gave an interactive voice workshop. The only complaints heard were that people could only go to one session rather than all three.

Organizing the event has been satisfying and enjoyable. The work involved has been very varied from designing a website, to judging abstracts, to creating and managing a budget. We've made contact with a large number of people in our field, raised ~£5000 in funding and promoted the work we do here in Bristol to the rest of the UK membrane trafficking community. One of the things that surprised me most has been how happy people were to support us from invited speakers to the sponsors and, of course, all of the people who came. We are very grateful to all those involved for their help in making the day such a success.

Feedback from the event has been very positive. Although stressful at times, once the day was underway, it was deeply gratifying to see people giving talks, chatting around posters and discussing aspects of membrane biology and to realize that they were all there because of us! ■



Delegates at the YLS Bristol



YLS Bristol organizing committee

YLS Symposium, University College Cork, September 2013

Caitríona Long-Smith (University College Cork, Ireland)

When I first heard about the opportunity to host a Young Life Scientists' Symposium here in University College Cork, I admit I was somewhat cautious as to what to expect. Having never been part of a committee arranging a conference before, and having only experienced scientific meetings from a delegate's perspective, all of us on the committee – Harriët Schellekens (Chair), Ciara O'Flanagan, Louise Foley, Rachel Moloney and me – soon learned the hard way what exactly is involved in the process. Fortunately, we proved to be a good team, and with guidance from the IASBS Secretary, Dr Eoin Fleming, who is also based here in UCC, as well as invaluable help from Elizabeth Faircliffe in the Biochemical Society, we soon had our application accepted and were on the way to successfully organizing the Irish YLS Conference on 'Cell Signalling'.

Our first main task was to approach potential keynote speakers. As each of us in the committee have slightly different research interests, we kept the topic of the conference purposefully broad to similarly appeal to a wide range of young life scientists. We each invited a speaker by whom we were personally inspired for the quality and breadth of their research. We were delighted at the response, and soon had a stellar line-up of Professor Timothy Dinan (University College Cork) and Professor Catherine Stanton (Teagasc) for our 'Brain and Gut' session; Professor David Ron (University of Cambridge) for the 'Diseases of Protein Misfolding'; Professor Marina Lynch (Trinity College Dublin), who also received the IASBS Silver Medal at our event, for the 'Neurodegeneration' session; and Professor Antoine Karnoub (Harvard Medical School), who spoke in our 'Cancer' session.

With the webpage set up, and advertising in place, the high standing of the scientists who accepted our invitation to be keynote speakers quickly attracted young life scientist delegates in numbers that exceeded our initial hopes. We had just over 75 abstracts, with 66 poster presenters on the day of the conference and ten selected oral speakers. Over 110 delegates in all, both national and international, were in attendance on the day of the conference, which was held in the Western Gateway Building in UCC, a wonderful location for such an event. Our conference was also a satellite event to the Neuroscience Ireland Conference, a Joint Meeting with the Irish Area Section of the Biochemical Society, which took place on the two days after our meeting at the same venue.

We knew that finding sponsorship for the conference was going to be challenging, but with a sizable contribution already in place from the Biochemical Society, we soon found that the additional money required began to flow in throughout the summer. We were grateful for sponsorship from Abcam, Sigma–Aldrich, Cisbio, the PhD Scholars HRB Cancer Biology Programme in UCC, the IASBS, Vector Laboratories, the APC in UCC and Cruinn Diagnostics Ltd.

As the conference was aimed at Masters, PhD students and early-career postdocs, we were anxious to provide a careers session to provide useful information about pursuing a research career in both academia and industry. We are fortunate in UCC to have an excellent Research Office which provides guidance and support for researchers, no matter what stage of their career they are at, and Dr Siobhan Cusack agreed to speak about grant writing as part of our Careers Session. We also arranged for a speaker, Dr Deirdre Buckley, from the local Eli Lilly plant in Kinsale to speak to us about making a career move to industry.

As the day of the conference drew near, there were many to-do lists collated and things to be checked off. The chores were divided up between us, and we found we were getting through them enthusiastically and efficiently, and we all were getting really excited about the day. It was an early start on the day of the conference as, with so many interesting topics and speakers to get through, we had quite a packed programme. The delegates and speakers arrived, the lecture theatre began to fill up, and the day began! Following an opening address by our Vice President for Research and Innovation, Professor Anita Maguire, the Irish YLS 'Cell Signalling' conference was underway. Our speakers, both the experienced keynote speakers of today and the early-career keynote speakers of the future, were received with interest and enthusiastic questioning, validating our decision to keep the sessions broad to lead to productive cross-disciplinary ideas. The careers session too was received with great interest, and was a valuable contribution to the day. The poster sessions were lively affairs, and the camaraderie of the delegates flowed over to the informal social event at the end of the day, where eminent scientists supped pints with the early-career researchers, and a good night was had by all.

Overall, the day had been a success, and we the committee were tired but happy. We all discussed how valuable the whole experience had been to us, and we are grateful for the opportunities this conference has given us. We were delighted particularly with the number of enthusiastic delegates who made the effort to attend our conference, and this just goes to show that the future of biological science here in Ireland is very bright indeed. ■



YLS Cork organizing committee