

**Hayley Tyrer**

**7<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary International Symposium on Recent Advances in Otitis Media**



I was awarded a Society of Biology travel grant so that I could attend the 7<sup>th</sup> *Extraordinary International Symposium on Recent Advances in Otitis Media* in Stockholm, Sweden on the 12-16 June 2013. Otitis media (OM) is a common childhood condition and the most frequent cause of conductive hearing impairment in children. It is perceived by many to be a transient affliction that in reality places a substantial social, medical and economic burden on healthcare systems globally. There is a need to understand in greater detail the pathobiology of OM and the links between immune system responses, genetics and chronic disease in order to develop new treatment regimens. I have recently completed a PhD at the Medical Research Council, Mammalian Genetics Unit where I was conducting research to improve our understanding of otitis media pathobiology by using a murine model of OM, and researching potential treatments to help alleviate the significant morbidity consequent to this form of conductive hearing loss. Specifically, I have been attempting phenotype modulation in a mouse model of OM through utilising antibody therapy and genetic background.

This international symposium brought together clinicians, clinical scientists, and basic research scientists from all over the world in their quest to understand, and hopefully one day cure, OM. Exhibits were also provided by a number of technological and pharmaceutical institutions which specialised in equipment for diagnostics and surgical intervention for OM. This conference provided me with an excellent opportunity to present my most recent data during the poster session and was a fantastic platform for informing my future research directions by understanding the work that other research labs are currently undertaking. The conference itself showcased a wide range of topics in a variety of research areas relating to OM. Important presentations in the context of my own research were included within the molecular medicine and genetics in otitis media, innate immune mechanisms and immunology and vaccines sessions. Hearing the WHO representative for prevention of blindness and deafness (Dr Shelly Chadha) offer her opinions on the global scale of OM was also extremely relevant to basic research scientists and offered a chance to put our often niche research into the global context.

The conference benefitted me in many ways, not least through providing me with the opportunity to present my work again in a public forum. Consequently, I have grown more confident in presenting my work at an international level and it has hopefully meant that well established researchers in the field will continue to recognise my name in future publications and presentations.

I believe that travel grants like this are a vital part of a young researcher's career development and I would like to extend my deepest thanks to the Society of Biology for the award of this grant. Without the support from the society, I would have not been able to attend this prestigious conference!