

**Kif Liakath-Ali**

**27<sup>th</sup> International Mammalian Genome Conference, Salamanca, Spain.**

I was fortunate enough to get selected for the Society of Biology travel grant to attend the 27<sup>th</sup> International Mammalian Genome Conference (IMGC) held at the historical Spanish town, Salamanca. This conference was organised under the aegis of International Mammalian Genome Society. My abstract was selected for an oral presentation at this conference, which is indeed a great recognition for the work I have been doing for past three years.

I am a PhD student at Cambridge University under the supervision of Professor Fiona Watt. Currently we are based at King's College London due to a recent lab move. My research is focused on large-scale genetic screening to identify novel genes involved in mammalian skin function. To do this, I employ a reverse genetic strategy, i.e., correlating an observed phenotype to an underlying genotype in hundreds of mouse mutants generated by the International Knockout Mouse Consortium (IKMC). Identifying novel genes involved in skin function is crucial as it allows us to understand how tissue homeostasis is maintained at a genetic level. I have identified 47 novel genes, ablation of which leads to abnormal phenotype in mouse skin. Many skin phenotypes in mice were linked to human diseases with some form of skin condition. The mouse models identified in this study would serve as a valuable tool to explore the pathobiology of human skin conditions.



Oral presentation at an international conference is an excellent opportunity for any PhD student. I presented my work on “A large scale reverse genetic screen to identify novel skin phenotypes in mouse mutants”.

This was my first ever chance to talk in front of a massive scientific gathering about my work. I seized the opportunity to present and definitely gained a valuable experience. Obviously, I had to do many rehearsals with my lab colleagues, which in fact paid off. Questions and feedback from the audience were useful. Interactions with senior academics and fellow student participants provided me with a better understanding of recent advances in mouse genetics. Mentoring tables during lunch allowed us to meet and chat one-to-one with experts in different areas of mouse genetics. Bioinformatics and systems biology workshops were other highlights of the conference.



Getting selected to present at this conference was a valuable addition to my academic achievements and the knowledge I gained furthered my understanding of mouse genetics.

I am grateful to the Society of Biology for the travel grant support. This award is indeed a great source of motivation for young researchers like me.