

# Travel Bursary Recipient Reports 2012 - 2013

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**Trevor Darby - School of Medicine**

Report by **Trevor Darby**, PhD student, School of Medicine

I am a final year PhD student in the Department of Medicine. The 16th International Congress of Mucosal Immunology (ICMI 2013) was held in Vancouver, Canada. The meeting takes place every two years and the objective of this conference was to communicate current state of the art research in mucosal immunology and to advance the development of new targets for treatment of mucosal diseases.

I gained a wealth of experience presenting my work to an international audience and had the opportunity to network as a result of my poster presentation. Moreover I received some great ideas pertaining to my own research, while developing new contacts that I am currently pursuing in relation to post-doctoral employment. Attending the conference also afforded me the chance to see and talk to one of the keynote speakers of the week, Dr. Ramnik Xavier, one of the world's leading researchers in my field. My sincere gratitude and thanks to the Graduate School, Medicine and Health for the travel bursary which afforded me the opportunity to attend this conference.

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## Martin Davoren - Department of Epidemiology and Health

Report by **Martin Davoren**, PhD student, Department of Epidemiology and Health

Thanks to receiving a travel bursary from the College of Medicine & Health I had the opportunity to travel to Ljubljana, Slovenia to attend the European Survey Research Association conference in July. This conference aims to investigate “survey designs, procedures and analysis techniques with the objective of improving survey quality”. Researchers from a variety of backgrounds across Europe attend the conference with inspiring keynote speeches being delivered by Willem Saris and Mick Couper.

During the conference I had the opportunity to give a presentation on the first of my PhD papers which examines the impact of mode of data collection on individual response. I received a lot of helpful feedback and advice from experts in the field on how I could improve it. In addition, sessions and workshops throughout the week spoke about errors and analysis plans for survey research, something I will be incorporating into my PhD.



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**Fiona Geaney - Department of Epidemiology and Public Health**

Report by **Fiona Geaney**, PhD student, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health

I attended the 2013 Annual Meeting of the International Society for Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity (ISBNPA) in Ghent, Belgium in May! I was grateful to attend my first international conference. Ghent was also a beautiful city to visit! The conference was focused on behavioural nutrition and in particular on my research area of interest, dietary interventions. The key note speakers including Professor Tim Lang and Professor Ruth Loos were inspiring.

I had the opportunity to present two posters including my systematic review and my study protocol. I received helpful feedback regarding my systematic review and the paper has since been accepted for publication with Preventive Medicine. I also discussed my study protocol with fellow researchers from the USA and there is a potential for future collaboration. It was a very worthwhile experience for me and my future career. I hope to be accepted for an oral presentation for this conference next year.



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## **Shane Hegarty - Department of Neuroscience & Anatomy**

Report by **Shane Hegarty**, PhD Student, Department of Neuroscience & Anatomy

I am writing to firstly thank the Graduate School, College of Medicine and Health for giving me the opportunity to take part in the massively beneficial Neuroscience School of Advanced Studies (Cortona, Italy) course in 'Neural stem cells in Development and Brain Repair'. It was a fantastic 8 day course that will shape my research career for the foreseeable future.

Although my current PhD research only scratches the surface of the extensive Neural Stem Cell field, what I have learned from the course has greatly improved my understanding of the development of neural stem cells and my appreciation of their therapeutic potential. What made this course so special was the fact that the pioneers of this field each shared their knowledge of neural stem cells and their research (a lot of which was unpublished) in great detail. Such extensive information could only be attained from working under such individuals normally, and would not be available from merely reading their published works, not to mention what was learned from them sharing their unpublished works and current research. The fact that these great scientists explained their work made it much easier to fully understand. They thought us concepts which would be difficult to grasp or even discern from reading their publications. These pioneers also divulged their own theories and future plans, which allowed me to see where this field will be going in the future.

In addition to massively broadening my knowledge of neural stem cells, this course have me the opportunity to meet 39 other scientists (see photo below) that worked in this field (only a few of which were fellow PhD students just beginning their research careers). I engaged in many helpful scientific discussions with these people, who I would now consider friends, and I am certain that I will work on collaborations with people in the future. Perhaps even more beneficial, in terms of establishing contacts in this research field, was meeting the guest speakers. I am now hoping to work under one of these leading scientists once I graduate.



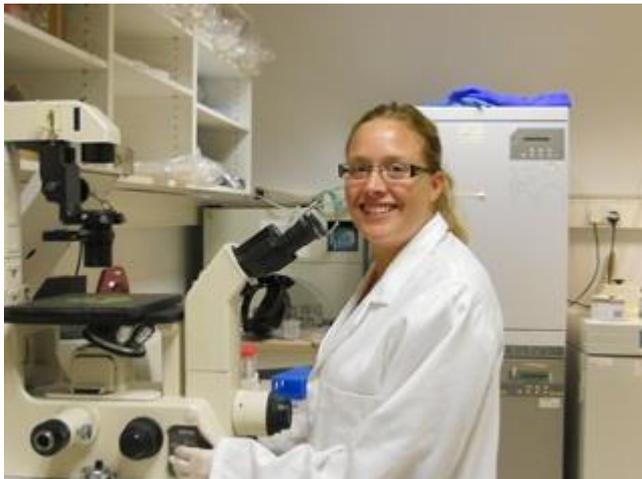
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## **Jennifer Hollywood - Department of Physiology**

Report by **Jennifer Hollywood**, PhD Student, Department of Physiology

This bursary allowed me to travel to Lisbon, Portugal and attend the 37<sup>th</sup> European Cystic Fibrosis Society meeting. The event significantly helped further my knowledge of current cystic fibrosis studies being undertaken by the wider scientific community. I received up to date information on the many clinical trials being carried out and also I gained more insight into the basic research performed. As I am in the process of writing up my thesis this was invaluable.

It gave me the opportunity to talk about the work we carry out here in UCC and make others aware of the potential it has in the world of gene therapy for CF. I was able to meet and converse with leaders in the field and solidified a new collaboration we are going to begin with a research group in the University of Dundee. We have since been awarded a grant from the CF trust UK and as many of the reviewers were present at the meeting it is likely that presenting my findings at the meeting helped secure this funding.



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## **Catriona Lyons - Department of Pathology**

Report by **Catriona Lyons**, PhD student, Department of Pathology

The International Congress of Immunology is held once every three years, attracting experts in the field and this was no exception. The Basic Immunology course which I participated in was lectured by both Prof. Abul Abbas and Prof. Andrew Lichtman, renowned researchers in the field of immunology and authors of “Cellular and Molecular Immunology”, a book I studied for my primary degree. I heard Nobel laureate Jules Hoffmann speak, a man who was instrumental in kick-starting research into the field of mammalian Toll-like receptors through his work on *Drosophila*. I heard fascinating talks by Eddy F. Y. Liew (the anti-inflammatory response of the host) and Vishva Dixit (recent progress in understanding inflammasome biology) to name but a few. Workshop presentations by my peers gave me insight into current research topics, as well as providing some ideas that I can incorporate into my own research. I also received positive feedback regarding my research during the poster session. Without this bursary, I would have been unable to attend what was a magnificent conference.



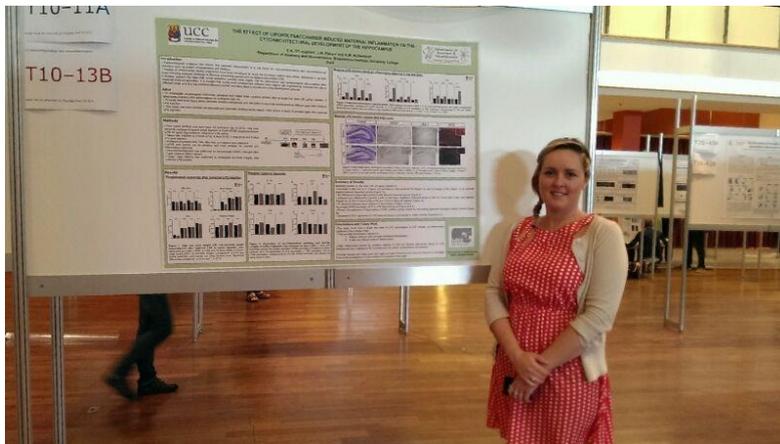
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## **Elaine O' Loughlin - Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience**

Report by **Elaine O' Loughlin**, PhD Student, Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience

I am a final year PhD student in the Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience. I attended the Glia Conference in Berlin this July. This is a Neuroscience conference held every two years that revolves around particular brain cells and what they do in health and disease scenarios. The conference was a week long and people from all over the world attended.

It was a big meeting but small enough that it wasn't too daunting for students to attend. I had never attended an international conference of this scale before so I was initially nervous and apprehensive but that soon went once I arrived. It began with an introductory course which was extremely helpful. I found the conference symposiums to be incredibly interesting and very beneficial. The poster session was on the final two days. This gave me the opportunity to speak about my research to people whom are in a similar research areas.



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## **Ana Oliveira - Department of Speech & Hearing Sciences**

Report by **Ana Oliveira**, PhD Student, Department of Speech & Hearing Sciences

I am currently in the first year of my PhD, which is funded by the Health Research Board. However, this funding does not cover travelling and/or conference expenses. Thankfully, I was successful in my application for a College of Medicine and Health Doctoral Student Bursary, which allowed me to attend the Child Language Seminar in the University of Manchester in June 2013.

At present, my research topic (i.e. the effect of an unfamiliar speaker accent on the comprehension of children with language difficulties) represents a major gap in our knowledge. Thus, the main aim of attending this conference was to link with other people in my field and raise awareness of the significance of my area of research. I had the opportunity to meet other PhD students and liaise with Speech and Language Therapists who work with children with language impairments in Ireland (i.e. the population that I will be recruiting for my PhD).

As a first year PhD student, I had never attended an international conference before, and the Child Language Seminar provided me with a lot more than a networking opportunity. It gave me a unique insight into the research and academic world which I am now becoming a part of. For instance, I learned that perhaps the key part of conference presentations is not the 10 – 20 minutes of presentation time itself, but rather the 10 minutes of questions and discussions that follow each presentation. It was eye opening to see the audience's level of involvement in these thought provoking discussions. It felt like we were all part of a community: a group of people with similar interests, thrilled to learn from each other.

However, I also witnessed the tough skin that the presenters need in order to defend and justify their work. The discussions can get quite intense, and as a presenter/researcher you need to be able to stand by your work and have a rationale for every bit of your research. These were extremely valuable lessons to learn during my first year of research, which I will carry with me throughout my PhD. Furthermore, I had the honour to attend presentations given by influential people in my field, such as Dr. Michael Tomasello. Listening to Dr. Tomasello and witnessing first-hand the passion he has for what he does was extremely inspiring. That passion and excitement is something that I hope to bring to my own research.

This two-day conference offered me the tools to succeed in future conferences, where I hope to eventually present my own research. I learned how conferences are run, how networking takes place, and what to expect from conference presentations. I am very grateful for the opportunity to attend such a prestigious conference in the first year of my PhD. The next two years will certainly benefit from this early on experience.



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## **Julie O' Neill - Department of Physiology**

Report by **Julie O' Neill**, PhD Student, Department of Physiology

The College of Medicine and Health were kind enough to award me a travel Bursary to attend the International Union of Physiologists conference (IUPS 2013) in Birmingham in July. Here I presented a poster based on work carried out during my PhD. I got the opportunity to discuss my work with experts in the field of renal physiology and receive very helpful feedback about my work.

I attended some excellent lectures that were very specific to my interests and detailed the most up to date advances in the field of Ang (1-7) and this included work that hasn't even been published yet, so that was very exciting . All and All, it was a great experience!



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## **Tim Regan - Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre**

Report by **Tim Regan**, PhD Student, Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre

I recently attended the American Association of Immunologists (AAI) conference in Honolulu. This is a prestigious international conference with all of the major players in American immunology as well as many from overseas. The journal associated with the AAI is the Journal of Immunology (JI) to which I had submitted a paper prior to attending the conference. The paper has been reviewed and returned with interest and a few minor corrections so it was indeed a great opportunity to further my research by attending such a conference. The student doctoral travel bursary was essential in allowing me to afford the flights for this conference.

At the conference, I was awarded the opportunity to present my data through both oral and poster presentations. This led to excellent feedback on my work from esteemed researchers and PIs as well as international recognition of the APC and UCC through the interest in my work presented. In addition the conference allowed me to make some excellent contacts and possible future collaboration with researchers from other institutions – something I've already benefited from since my return in carrying out the final experiments towards my PhD thesis.

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### **Sarah-Jo Sinnott - Department of Epidemiology and Public Health**

Report by **Sarah-Jo Sinnott**, PhD Student, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health

The travel bursary awarded to me by the Graduate School of the College of Medicine and Health allowed me to travel to New Orleans to present my research at the International Society of Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research in May 2013. This was a fantastic opportunity.

I attended numerous workshops that were held the weekend before the conference started. The teaching and content of the workshops was brilliant, and I can use this knowledge in my present work and also in future work that is planned for my thesis. I also attended all student events, which were invaluable for obtaining career advice and direction. I made many new acquaintances and contacts, which I will be able to maintain as the European meeting of this conference is in Dublin in November. Email contact with some other delegates has helped to progress my research already. My poster presentation went extremely well.

