**Second Matrix Biology Europe meeting. Athens, Greece 11th-14th June 2016**

I had the pleasure, and most importantly, the honour, to be invited to give a talk in one of the workshops of the Matrix Biology Europe (MBE) conference 2016. I also had the honour to chair two sessions in the meeting. This was, formally speaking, the second conference of MBE. In reality MBE is the follow-up of what used to be the FECTS meeting. The FECTS meetings were the conferences of the Federation of European Connective Tissue Societies which was first established in 1968. FETCS meeting used to happen every two years and following the last one in Katowice in Poland in 2012, the meetings were renamed MBE. The first MBE was held in Rotterdam, in the Netherlands in 2014 and the second one was in Athens, 11th-14th June 2016, which is the one I attended and I am writing about.

The meeting was organised by Prof Nikos Karamanos from the University of Patras. It took place in an excellent venue, a Hotel in the middle of Athens, where, from the roof terrace you could have a wonderful view of the magnificent Acropolis. This is how we used to have our breakfasts and the conference dinner! Something special, which, for a strong Greece fan like me had a particular taste of old beautiful memories of family holidays in Greece from my childhood time.

The meeting itself was simply excellent. The level of Science around different topics of Matrix Biology was outstanding. Here you had the chance to attend talks which you would generally attend at a Gordon Conference, with the difference, that in a Gordon Conference the topics are highly specialised, whereas at this MBE meeting you had a wide range of cutting edge talks in different aspects of Extracellular Matrix Biology.

I have to say that I thoroughly enjoyed the meeting. Not only for the science, but also for the informal and inclusive atmosphere that it brought. I have been in the Matrix field for several years, and, obviously knew many of the people that attended. So, for me it was a great chance to catch up with colleagues I have known for a while, but also to meet new ones, and so to develop new ideas and potential future collaborations. On top of this, I think that this informal inclusiveness, which is also very much the ethos of the Anatomical Society, is fundamental to encourage young people to join the field. After all this is what will make the field of Matrix Biology grow in the future. This conclusion was confirmed by a young investigator who gave a talk and said that he didn’t know anyone but he felt welcome. I think that this is an excellent testimony of how good a highly rated scientific meeting could, and, should be: open and welcoming.

I can’t go, for confidentiality reasons through the details of the scientific contents of each individual talk and poster, but the programme can be found at *http://www.mbe2016.upatras.gr*, if you wish to know more about the details of the speakers and the topics. I can only say that in my talk I highlighted the importance and the role of anatomical investigations in a cell biology and molecular genetic driven world, underscoring the importance of anatomical observations when analysing mutant mice. I think in fact, that it is essential to keep in mind how fundamental and complementary to molecular investigations Anatomical knowledge is, not only in matrix Biology but in any other field of research.

I enjoyed the meeting greatly and I would recommend anyone who has an interest in Matrix Biology to attend an MBE meeting. The next one is in 2018 in Manchester, so not too far from our world, and it is going to be held in one of the most excellent venues for Matrix Biology, i.e. the Wellcome Trust Matrix Centre.

I would like to thank Prof Nikos Karamanos for inviting me to talk at such a highly rated meeting, and, obviously the Anatomical Society for supporting my participation. It has been a wonderful experience and I repeat that I would strongly encourage anyone to attend an MBE meeting, in particular young people who aim to develop their career in the fascinating field which is the biology of extracellular matrix.

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