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| NAME | | Tracey Wilkinson | | |
| UNIVERSITY | | University of Dundee | | |
| NAME OF AWARD | | Symington Bequest | | |
| PURPOSE OF AWARD *conference attended (full name) with city and dates* | | | | |
| To attend the Experimental Biology and American Association of Anatomists 2015 conference in Boston, USA | | | | |
| REPORT: What were your anticipated benefits? | | | | |
| I was hoping to:  - attend and learn from the many and varied sessions available at the conference  - increase the number of contacts I already have in the USA  - follow up on some possibilities from a previous visit to this conference | | | | |
| COMMENTS: Describe your experience at the conference / lab visit / course / seminar. | | | | |
| The Experimental Biology Meeting that took place from Saturday 28 April to Wednesday 1 April also hosted the American Association of Anatomists’ Annual Conference, attended by approximately 900 members. I had been to the AAA conference in 2013, so it was good to be back in the beautiful city of Boston, the birthplace of the American nation.  The EB conference is huge and multifaceted. Even at the AAA site, there were multiple anatomical sessions running simultaneously, so it was often difficult to decide which one to attend! There were some interesting sessions on comparative anatomy or palaeontology, with many people using biomechanical models to predict movement patterns. Notably, a group from Belgium were using some very impressive software to model the prehension of the seahorse tail, which has an unusual square shape, unlike the more common round tails of most animals. Another group from Harvard had revisited the origins of locomotion on land, analysing the skeletal structure of Ichthyostega with the use of three dimensional CT images, deciding that the locomotory patterns of these animals was likely to be closer to mudskippers than salamanders.  The first day was greeted with a session on the role of women in science subjects, highlighting the continuing inequalities in many areas, and it was hard to believe that even today, top women professors still receive only 88% of the salary of their male counterparts in the USA.  The education sessions were varied and interesting, with common themes being spatial ability and awareness, and the new requirements from the American equivalent of the GMC to provide medical students with more opportunities for self-directed learning, rather surprisingly since we have been doing this in the UK for many years. The quality of the education sessions seemed to have improved from the last time I attended, with fewer anecdotal presentations, and more scientific endeavour. I gave an oral presentation at one of these sessions, comparing student performance in anatomy spot tests depending on the type of question. At another session, our poster on the Anatomy Training Programme was well received, garnering interest from several people who were keen to join the course, or who were in the process of applying to the AAA. The educational session on various psychological aspects of anatomical learning, sponsored by the Anatomical Society, was well attended and stimulated some interesting discussion. All the presentations by members of the Society were branded clearly and allowed the presence of the Society to be repeatedly mentioned.  I would therefore very much like to thank the Anatomical Society for giving me a very generous Symington award, which made the trip affordable, and allowed me the opportunity to meet several useful and interesting contacts! I also attach a picture of the Ether Dome, the surgical theatre at the Massachusetts General Hospital where ether was first used as an anaesthetic in 1846, and which Claire Smith and I visited after the conference! | | | | |
| REPORT: In relation to skills, what were the most important things you gained? *(does not apply to equipment grant)* | | | | |
| The conference is a wonderful opportunity to network, meet old friends, and make new ones. I renewed contact with an American academic who I last saw about 12 years ago, and have set up some collaborative projects with two others. | | | | |
| REPORT: How do you think you will put this learning experience into practice in the future? | | | | |
| I hope to follow up on the contacts I made during the conference, setting up collaborative projects. | | | | |
| SIGNATURE | Tracey Wilkinson | | DATE | 3 April 2015 |

*If submitted electronically, a type-written name is acceptable in place of a hand-written signature*