

Meeting Report

Fellows day 2007

Monday 17th & Tuesday 18th September 2007

Moller Centre, Cambridge

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Present post: Associate Professor, The University of Warwick.



The annual Fellows Day is an opportunity for Kidney Research UK to demonstrate their continued interest and commitment to the support and development of young scientists and clinicians. In keeping with this, the theme throughout the two days was one of career development and research support. Fellows Day is also an ideal forum for Fellows, PhD students and grant holders to meet and discuss their recent work and a number of sessions were dedicated to presentations by Students and Fellows. This gave them the opportunity to present and discuss their work in front of a distinguished audience of Kidney Research UK stakeholders. This is always a challenge as the audience have a range of backgrounds from lay and management to senior clinical scientists. In addition to the presentations by the Students and Fellows, there were two cutting edge research talks by guest speakers (Dr Catherine Shanahan and Professor Olivier Devuyst). The programme also included two 'development' sessions. The first concentrated on how to write a successful grant application and the second discussed how to maximise your chances of getting your results published. Essential skills at any stage of your career. The lively audience participation in each session ensured that this year Fellows Day was highly successful.

The 2007 Fellows Day was held in the Moller Centre, Cambridge and in common with previous Fellows Day's this was an excellent venue. The two days were expertly chaired by Professor Fiona Karet (Chairperson of the Research Grants Committee). The meeting was introduced by Professor Neil Turner, Chairman, Kidney Research UK. He outlined improvements that had been made by Kidney Research UK in the last two years. Changes ranged from revised marketing and a new look website to a significant reduction in costs, which has improved the financial reserves of Kidney Research UK. The last year has also

seen the introduction of supporter receptions. These are regional events where local fundraisers and donors are thanked for their contribution. Professor Turner also highlighted his concerns that changes in clinical training and university funding may threaten kidney research.

The first of two groups of oral presentations by Students and Fellows started with a fascinating presentation by Dr David Kavanagh (Kidney Research UK Training Fellow) with a presentation on his studies of retinal vasculopathy with cerebral leukodystrophy, a genetic condition that causes stroke, retinopathy and renal disease. He was followed by Dr Gavin Stewart, who holds a Career Development Fellowship. Gavin is investigating the regulation of the urea transporter (UT-A3) which is important for concentrating urine. The third talk in this scientific session was by Dr David Ferenbach (Kidney Research UK Training Fellow). Studies have highlighted a role for macrophages in acute renal failure. David has been examining two different methods of depleting macrophages as potential treatments for renal ischemia and has discovered that the administration of apoptotic white blood cells is beneficial.

The afternoon started with an excellent presentation by Dr Catherine Shanahan (University of Cambridge, UK). Dr Shanahan is researching into the mechanisms of vascular calcification, which is a major cause of premature cardiovascular mortality in people with chronic kidney disease. She started by reminding us that she is an example of how a charity can provide effective long-term career support. She has received long-term funding from the British Heart Foundation (BHF) first as a BHF lecturer and then a BHF Senior Fellow. Her work also highlighted the interaction between two major areas; cardiovascular and renal research. In renal patients something triggers the conversion of vascular smooth muscle cells into bone producing osteoblasts. This presentation was fascinating, informative and a complete summary of the current state of the work in this field.

Short poster presentations by Ms Maria Fragiadaki (Kidney Research UK PhD Student), Mrs Nicola Thomas (Kidney Research UK/BRS Joint Fellow) and Dr Joe Wang (Kidney Research UK Training Fellow) whetted the appetite for the moderated poster sessions. Once again the range of topics funded by Kidney Research UK was highlighted including; identification of a fibroblast-specific element that regulates type 1 collagen (M Fragiadaki); can the implementation of a patient-centred education program delay the progression of diabetic kidney disease? (N Thomas); and a study examining whether inhibition of Kirsten-Ras can reduce renal fibrosis (J Wang). These sessions are a real challenge for the presenters as it is difficult to succinctly and clearly summarise your results in a very limited time, while using language comprehensible to a range of people.

After a short tea break Professors Mathieson and Mullins chaired an interactive session, which considered the process of applying for a grant. This is a process that gets increasingly difficult as financial constraints affect all types of funding bodies. Split into clinical and scientific applications they highlighted the questions that reviewers focus on and suggested 'tricks of the trade' that should improve our success rates.

Day one ended with the Outcomes Session, where three 'volunteers' present their results without props (no PowerPoint slides!) and in lay language. This is only the second year that this format has been used, but once again it was hugely entertaining and enlightening. This year's volunteers were Dr Ravi Barod, Dr Ross Francis and Dr Catherine Boulter who told us about how their research had contributed to the wider research programme and would benefit patients in the future and how vital Kidney Research UK support has been to their developing careers.



Dinner that evening was at the beautiful Magdalene College, Cambridge University. The after dinner speaker was Dr Donal O'Donoghue the National Director of Kidney Care (the Renal Tsar). The caption competition was won by Dr Laura Denby, who spent the evening wondering how she could get her prize, a bottle of wine, home by plane as she only had hand luggage!

Day two started with a fantastic talk by Professor Olivier Devuyst (Universit e Catholiques de Louvain Medical School, Belgium) on novel therapies in adult polycystic kidney disease. He expertly guided us through the complex, intracellular actions of vasopressin and explained how targeting this pathway may slow the progression of renal damage. He finished by discussing the application of new drugs in this area. This was a fascinating example of how an understanding of basic science and cell signalling has led to the selection and design of drugs that target a very specific process.

There followed the second group of poster and oral presentations by Kidney Research UK Fellows and Students. First up for the posters was Mr Elias Katsoulleris, who has a joint Kidney Research UK and Diabetes UK PhD Studentship. He described his work on glucose toxicity and oxidative stress and in particular how high glucose can induce endoplasmic reticulum stress. He was followed by Dr Tim Johnson (a recently completed Senior Fellow) and Dr Nicholas Jones (Kidney Research UK Senior Fellow). Three oral presentations were then presented by Dr Seema Shrivastava (Kidney Research UK Training Fellow), who told us about her work examining the link between tissue factor expression and dendritic cell function. She was followed by Dr Ceri Fielding (Kidney Research UK Career Development Fellow). Ceri has been investigating the role of cytokines in the development of peritoneal fibrosis following peritoneal infections. In particular it seems that the cytokine interleukin 6 is important. This session was concluded by a presentation by Dr Catherine Boulter (Kidney

Research UK Senior Fellow). This time Catherine discussed her results from studies investigating the NOV gene and in particular its role in ossification.

Day two concluded with a captivating talk by Professor Eberhard Ritz, who, within his amusing but highly relevant talk, reminded us of the legal responsibilities of authorship. He started by pointing out that if we didn't publish our results we need not have bothered to generate them! He then highlighted a number of examples of good and bad practise and language when it came to writing papers.

Professor Ritz's talk was an extremely good way to finish Fellows Day and brought us full circle from the money Kidney Research UK collect, how to obtain research funding, a fantastic group of presentations demonstrating the success and varied natures of the work funded by Kidney Research UK and finally the best way to publish the results.



Prizes were awarded as part of the event:

Best Oral Presentation

Dr David Ferenbach



Best Outcomes Presentation

Dr Catherine Boulter



Best Poster Presentation

Dr Nick Jones

