

## GWIS Travel Award: 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Herpesvirus Workshop in Portland, Oregon

I recently had the privilege of attending the 48<sup>th</sup> Annual International Herpesvirus Workshop in Portland, Oregon. While at the conference, I had the opportunity to give an oral presentation on my project “High-throughput screening identifies EGLN-family prolyl hydroxylases as important determinants of HCMV infection”. Additionally, I was able to present a poster during the conference. This was an incredibly valuable experience for the growth of my project, as well as my growth in the field of herpesvirology. I was able to interact with multiple leading experts in the field, who gave me suggestions for future experiments and how to improve the presentation of my current results. One interaction was with Dr. Michael Weekes from the Cambridge Institute for Medical Research. Dr. Weekes is a prominent member of the HCMV field and has done countless research into the host–microbe interaction. His work is commonly referenced in the Munger lab. Being able to talk with him following my presentation was incredibly helpful for my own work. Also following my presentation, I was approached by others to discuss potential collaborations utilizing our high-throughput screening technique. While interactions with established principal investigators were incredibly beneficial and fun during the conference, I also enjoyed meeting other up-and-coming investigators and students. Getting input on my work and discussing graduate school life in general with a wide range of perspectives was invaluable, and I plan on continuing to keep in touch with my newly made student friends into the future.

A great source of enjoyment for me during the conference was in presentations discussing viruses other than HCMV. While I entered the conference expecting to focus primarily on discussions involving HCMV, I found myself drawn to presentations discussing host interactions with viruses such as HSV or KSHV, pathogens that aren't a primary focus of my research. Being able to get a broader understanding of how viruses can manipulate a host cells in a variety of infectious diseases was valuable to how I think about HCMV. Additionally, with KSHV being such a recent discovery, it was interesting to hear about how a field can go from non-existent to robust in a 30-year span.

Portland was incredibly beautiful, and I really enjoyed my time there. While the conference did not allow for much time to explore, I was able to kayak the Columbia River during a conference-hosted outing. What an unforgettable experience! I want to extend my gratitude to GWIS for funding my travel to this gorgeous city and to an educational and fun conference. This conference has certainly helped me to connect with herpesvirus-field researchers.

Thank you,

Lucas Simpson