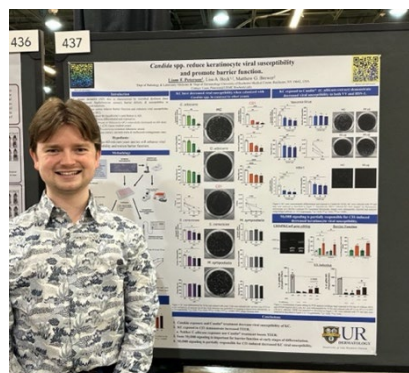


GWIS Travel Award: The Society of Investigative Dermatology Annual Meeting  
May 14<sup>th</sup> to May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024, in Dallas, TX.

I recently attended the Society of Investigative Dermatology Annual Meeting held in Dallas, TX, from May 14<sup>th</sup> to May 18<sup>th</sup>. While I was at the conference, I presented a poster on my PhD thesis project titled, “*Candida* spp. reduce keratinocyte viral susceptibility and promote barrier function.” I had the opportunity to speak about my work with researchers in dermatology from across the world, including Samuel Hwang, MD, PhD, Professor and Chair of Dermatology at University of California Davis, potential industry partners, and fellow graduate student researchers from US-based laboratories.



This was my first national conference, which was an inspiring experience from a personal and intellectual growth perspective. For example, I engaged with Elizabeth Blalock, executive editing manager for the Journal of Investigative Dermatology, with whom I was able to discuss some of the inner workings of scientific journals. Additionally, I learned more about how artificial intelligence is shaping the way we conduct clinical trials research in dermatology, and I explored new professional opportunities amongst industries (e.g. Estée Lauder, Sanofi, and Bristol Myers Squibb™) that partner with dermatological researchers. It was truly a pleasure to be a part of such a collegial and motivated group of individuals.

Prior to the meeting, I had applied for and was accepted to participate in the Future Leaders Retreat that was held before the official start of the conference. It was there that I had the chance to speak directly to emerging and established leaders in the field on critical aspects of professional development. Researchers such as Kathleen Green, PhD (Northwestern University), Elizabeth Grice, PhD (University of Pennsylvania), Lloyd Miller, MD, PhD (J&J Innovative Medicine), and my mentor, Matthew Brewer, PhD (University of Rochester Medical Center [URMC]), were invited to lead discussions on their career trajectories, how they have personally secured research funding from government or industry partners, and how graduate students can best position themselves to further career development. I also had the opportunity to speak candidly with Ricardo Cibotti, PhD (program officer, National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases), about the myriad challenges faced by researchers in both academic and non-academic settings. Dr. Cibotti shared strategies for how to leverage opportunities in both sectors to have the greatest chance of success. It was empowering to learn more explicitly about the prospects that exist for us as we begin considering next steps beyond the doctoral degree.

To participate in both the conference and the retreat was truly a privilege. I was accompanied by both of my mentors, Dr. Matthew Brewer and Dr. Lisa Beck, as well as a host of other professors and residents from the University of Rochester. This allowed me to expand my network by developing closer bonds with colleagues at URMC with whom I do not regularly cross paths. I am exceptionally grateful for the guidance that I was given by each of them in preparing for this experience, and I am likewise grateful to the Graduate Women in Science program for supporting my travel to the conference.