

DoLS Travel Awards Report

Dr Ioly Kotta-Loizou

6th European Congress of Virology, October 19-22, 2016, Hamburg, Germany

The European Congress of Virology (ECV) is the most important virology conference in Europe. The ECV is organised by the European Society for Virology every three years and covers all aspects of virus research, from basic virology to epidemiology and from immunology to antiviral therapy and vaccines. As usual ECV2016 focused mainly on human pathogenic viruses; moreover there was a workshop on veterinary virology and a few individual posters on plant viruses.

Of particular interest for me was the “Challenges in Clinical Virology” Symposium, which consisted of two excellent talks on two major pathogens, hepatitis C virus (HCV) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), by P. Buggisch and H.-J. Stellbrink, respectively. Both speakers covered the recent scientific advances in the field and discussed not only the medical but the social factors (such as the HIV-associated stigma) that constitute barriers to proper treatment of the patients.

Additionally, I enjoyed a talk entitled “Virus discovery in human and animals: From genomes to diseases”, by E. Delwart. The presentation was focused on the use of next generation sequencing for the detection of viruses, including potential practical problems that may affect the results such as contamination, and the challenges of associating the symptoms of a disease with the presence of a specific viral strain.

As a PhD student I attended ECV2010 and ECV2013 and presented my research on HCV in the poster sessions, while this time I was offered the chance to give an oral presentation on a novel virus family whose members infect fungi, have unusual characteristics in terms of sequence and genomic organisation and possibly constitute the missing link between single- and double-stranded RNA viruses. I was delighted for this opportunity, especially since mycovirology, as for all non-human or disease-related virology, is an underappreciated subject. My presentation was well received by my fellow virologists and I would like to thank the Department of Life Sciences for the financial support.