

London, 7th June 2017

DoLS travel award report

Dear DoLS team, dear judging panel

I was granted a DoLS travel award to attend the **BioMalParXIII** conference in Heidelberg, Germany on 29 - 31 May 2017.

This conference series is built on EU-funded Networks of Excellence BioMalPar and EviMalaR and is established as one of the most important conferences in the field of malaria molecular biology. It is a very good opportunity to network with other malaria researchers, additionally, it allowed me to meet my collaborators in person to discuss the progress of the project.

This year, BioMalParXIII addressed fundamental questions of the biology of the malaria parasite from vector biology, immunobiology, pathology and epidemiology and molecular and cellular biology. One of the hot topics in malaria research right now is the conversion from asexual to sexual stages. It is known that a specific transcription factor is responsible for this switch and that the expression of the transcription factor itself is epigenetically regulated. There were a good amount of oral as well as poster presentations focussing on epigenetic regulation in the malaria parasite, which is in line with the core aspects of my research project.

I gave an oral presentation entitled "*Malaria parasite lifecycle progression from host to vector reflected in the Plasmodium berghei epigenetic footprint*" in the vector biology session. This is a research project that has been sponsored by a SNSF fellowship and I have been working on for the past two years in the VigiLab led by George K. Christophides. I am investigating how the epigenetic landscape changes in parasites as they progress from host to vector, which is linked with their transition from asexual to sexual stages to form zygotes. Presenting my work to an audience of around 300 malaria researchers from a variety of fields facilitated to increase my visibility in the field and will help me to progress towards an independent research career in the future.

Many thanks for your support.

Yours sincerely,



Kathrin Witmer