



TRANSPLANTATION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

Newsletter September 2011

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Editorial Comment

Dear Members,

As I perused this edition, a number of thoughts came to mind. The reports in this issue highlight the vibrancy of the society and calibre of its members. The culture of participation by all major groups involved in the business of solid organ, tissue and cellular transplantation has ensured the continued success of TSANZ. Underpinned by remarkable past & present leaders and the tireless efforts of our executive officer, Aviva Rosenfeld and administrative officer, Sommer Twycross, the society is in strong position to face current and future challenges. Supporting and fostering our younger members, synergising the activities of our mid-career members and recognising the outstanding achievements of our senior members continues to be our core function. This was most evident at the annual scientific meeting this year. As the society grows and the interface with

government evolves, it is envisaged that TSANZ will not only continue to encompass clinical, scientific, and educational excellence but also become a significant voice in public policy pertaining to transplantation. Please enjoy the September Newsletter.

Dr Hilton Gock

President's Message

As incoming president I would like first of all to acknowledge the enormous contribution to the Society of our outgoing President Frank Ierino. His main goal throughout his presidency was to foster the science of transplant medicine and the education of our members and the broader community. In this he has been highly successful. In addition, Frank has skilfully steered the Society through a period of increased scrutiny of all aspects of organ and tissue donation and transplantation from the many stakeholders in the 'space'. Over the last few years, the newly created Australian Organ and Tissue Authority (AOTA) has increasingly looked to TSANZ to take a leadership role in establishing national benchmarks for organ and tissue transplantation. Frank's calm and authoritative leadership has been crucial in ensuring that clinical excellence in transplantation has not been compromised during our negotiations with AOTA and other stakeholders.

I would also like to acknowledge the tireless work of Peter Cowan on behalf of TSANZ in his multifaceted role of Communications/ Education & PGC Curriculum/ Liaison with Scientific Societies. Peter is also stepping down from Council. Among his many contributions, his work on the PGC curriculum has helped to establish the post graduate course as the major educational activity provided by our Society for our younger scientists and advanced trainees.

Congratulations to Geoff McCaughan who is our new President-elect. For the next two years Geoff will take over the important role of Chair of the Standing Committees. In this role he will be supported by 2 new project officers, Iman Ali and

Neridah Bermingham, who have just been appointed with funding provided by the AOTA. Their role will be to assist Geoff and all individual SC chairs through scheduling of meetings, preparation of agendas and drafting of minutes. The project officers will also play an important role in maintaining open lines of communication between TSANZ, ATCA and AOTA. This will be particularly important for the incorporation of future amendments to the Consensus Statement which was officially 'launched' at the annual scientific meeting in June by the Parliamentary Secretary for Health, the Honourable Catherine King. The other members remaining on Council are Toby Coates (Honorary Secretary), Scott Campbell (Treasurer), Steve Alexander (RACP Liaison/Membership Benefits/Awards & Grants), Michael Fink (Surgical Rep) and Francesca Rourke (ATCA Rep). I welcome John Kanellis and Hilton Gock as the new members to Council and look forward to their contributions over the coming years.

The annual scientific meeting remains the centrepiece of the Society's scientific and educational activities and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank Rob Carroll and Chris Russell for the excellent scientific and social program they prepared this year. Feedback from attendees including our international invited speakers has been uniformly positive. Thanks also to Henry Pleass and Wai Lim for the excellent curriculum they put together for the postgraduate course. I have received a lot of positive feedback regarding the mixing of basic and clinical science across the two days (rather than division between day one and two). Congratulations to all the prize winners from the ASM. There are too many to mention all by name but I would like to especially congratulate our basic and clinical President's Prize winners Renee Robb and Michael Collins.

The Society's membership continues to grow and for the first time in the Society's history we now have over 700 members across the different categories. Much of the recent growth has come through the uptake of conjoint ATCA/TSANZ and TNA/TSANZ membership. I look forward to their contributions to the Society and I hope that they along all our new members find that TSANZ membership is a rewarding experience.

Peter Macdonald
President, TSANZ

Secretary's Report

The major news for this report of the TSANZ newsletter is the upcoming TSANZ/Australian Society of Immunology workshop that will be held in conjunction with the ASI meeting in the Adelaide Convention Centre. The workshop will be in two parts,

with a focus of Luminex antibodies in the morning and a focus on transplant tolerance in the afternoon. There are three international visitors for the workshop and the ASI meeting. On the clinical front in the morning Professor Adriana Zeevi from the University of Pittsburgh will present on the significance of Luminex defined DSA in lung and renal transplantation. In the afternoon, we are fortunate to have Professor Megan Sykes from Columbia University and Professor Kathryn Wood from University of Oxford to discuss Transplant Tolerance with the Tolerance Interest Group of the TSANZ. The purpose of the meeting will be to work towards an Australian consensus on significant donor-specific antibody levels and approaches to allocation. In the afternoon, the Tolerance Interest Group of the TSANZ will host discussions around the use of T regs in potential tolerance protocols. The cost of the workshop, which includes lunch and morning and afternoon tea is \$90. Both Professors Wood and Sykes will present in plenary sessions in the main meeting, providing a very strong transplantation theme for ASI and showcase transplantation immunology at the national level.

As TSANZ is a sponsor of the ASI meeting, TSANZ members enjoy reduced ASI rate for registration for the main meeting. Abstract deadline for the main meeting is September 30th (www.asi2011.org) TSANZ members are strongly encouraged to stay on and attend the ASI which is the leading Australasian Immunology Meeting. The invited immunologists represent the leaders in the general immunology field and include Alberto Mantovani - University of Milan, Italy, Michel Nussenzweig - The Rockefeller Institute, New York, USA and Richard A Flavell - Yale University School of Medicine, USA. The full details of invited speakers are on the ASI website. Transplantation will be very well represented with TSANZ luminaries including Geoff Hill, Shane Grey and Derek Hart as local speakers in addition to Megan Sykes and Kathryn Wood. The transplantation focus in this years ASI meeting will allow members of the society to interact with international leaders in the transplantation immunology field. TSANZ young investigator members who submit an abstract will also be eligible for receipt of a generous TSANZ-ASI Travel award to attend the meeting and present their work. The TSANZ-ASI Travel award application form and details of submission can be found on the TSANZ website, with the abstract deadline being the 30th of September. Adelaide is always a great city to visit and December is an excellent time to make the trip and I strongly encourage all members to support the TSANZ and the basic and clinical science workshop at the meeting.

As always, the TSANZ remains one of the most generous special societies, with a commitment to returning benefits to its members and I would like to draw the attention of members to the awards of the society, which continue to provide support to attend international meetings to present their work (www.tsanz.com.au). The submission deadlines for awards are available online.

Toby Coates
Honorary Secretary, TSANZ

Treasurer's Report

As I write this report, global share markets are crashing around us, and other components of global financial markets threaten to follow. Pleasingly for TSANZ, our Credit Rating remains intact, we are not at risk of defaulting, and other than a small blip in our relatively small share fund investments it seems to be fairly steady as she goes.

The financial situation of the Society remains solid, and as announced at the AGM in Canberra, approximately three-quarters of a million dollars has been set aside for future educational and research activities. The largest part of this is the profit that was gleaned from the outstanding TTS Meeting in Sydney in 2008. It is envisaged that over the next few years we will draw down \$50 – 100,000 each year for a major Society project or event, starting with the Luminex/Tolerance Workshop to be held in Adelaide in December 2011.

Members of the Society are encouraged to submit suggestions for these projects, which will hopefully take on different topics and formats from year to year. In the meantime Council will continue to monitor this fund, and the impact of these regular draw downs, in the context of the Society's broader finances. While we have been fortunate that our financial situation has not been badly effected by the last few years of economic difficulty, we need to remain vigilant for future challenges that may present.

Scott Campbell
Treasurer, TSANZ

Standing Committees

National Transplant Authority Project

As many of you know, Geoff McCaughan has succeeded Peter Macdonald as Chair of the Standing Committees. Peter as leader and all standing committee members are to be congratulated on the incredible task in producing the "Consensus Statement on Eligibility Criteria and Allocation Protocols" and there is no one better qualified than

Geoff to move forward with the project. In keeping with the agreement with the Australian Organ and Tissue Authority (AOTA), the next step will be to develop audit mechanism and audit reports that will allow AOTA and the public to monitor adherence to the consensus statements. AOTA have allocated appropriate clerical/administrative support to assist the process. As the function of the Standing Committees are 'formalised' to facilitate the project, it is anticipated that all interest group issues will continue alongside policy development that council considers a natural synergy.

Education & Science Report

29th Annual Scientific Meeting
29th June - 1st July, 2011
Manning Clarke Centre, Canberra

The ASM this year was masterfully convened by Robert Carroll and Christine Russell. It was the third year the meeting was held at the Manning Clark Centre, ANU the delegates are now well accustomed to the setting and bottomless supply of quality coffee. The attendance of all sessions particularly the plenary and state-of-the-art sessions was a testament to the quality of the program.

The international speakers namely Prof Peter S. Heeger (New York, USA), Prof Edward K Geissler (Regensburg, Germany), and Prof Nigel Heaton (London, UK) worked hard during the conference providing a number of attention-grabbing presentations on various aspects of immunosuppression, new insights in immunology and advances in hepatic transplantation. This was complemented by presentations from distinguished list of invited local speakers and free communications sessions where lively discussion often continued in the foyer during the breaks.

The annual dinner was held at the National Gallery of Australia. After viewing the indigenous art exhibit delegates heard the invited speaker, Ms Yael Cass who outlined her vision as incoming CEO of the Australian Organ & Tissue authority which was very well received. Professors Jeremy Chapman and Anthony D'Apice were made honorary life members. Professors Philip O'Connell and Peter Cowan elegantly summarise their outstanding achievements using a combination of facts, stories and Aussie humour.

Congratulations to all award recipients listed below travel grant recipients some of whom who have detailed their experiences later in this bulletin.

Prizes associated with the ASM

President's Prize (Scientific): Renee Robb
 President's Prize (Clinical): Michael Collins
 Honorary Life Membership: Professor Jeremy Chapman and Professor Anthony d'Apice
 Amgen-TSANZ Innovative Research Grant: A/Prof Steve Alexander
 KHA Clinical Research Award: Phillip Clayton
 KHA Lab Research Award: Jeanette Villanueva
 Ian McKenzie Prize: A/Prof Steve Alexander
 Mark Cocks Scholarship: Allison Tong
 Novartis and Wyeth Young Investigator Awards: Fui Jiun Choong, Michael Collins, Miriam Habib, Helen Hurst, Arjun Iyer, Eddy Lee, Kate Markey, Avi Raman, Renee Robb, Kisha Sivanathan, Jeanette Villanueva, Kenneth Yong and Nathan Zammit
 Amgen and BMS Book Vouchers: Tara Bull, Michael Chu, Philip Clayton, Alison Clarke, Michelle Lewiski, Daniella Penko and Emilia Prakoso

Our innovative convenors organised the inaugural TSANZ 5 km fun run/walk on a June 30th. Runners were provided with Donate Life T-shirts to raise the public profile of organ donation. The run was started by Mr Jim Matthieson and attended by TSANZ President Frank Ierino, AOTA CEO Ms Yael Cass, transplant recipient Ms Diane Shultz and significant number of TSANZ delegates. After a final briefing of the course given by Robert Carroll, participants set off from University House down to alongside the mist-covered lake, then back up across campus back to University House. The high participation rate may well see this event continue annually.

Post-Graduate Training Course

27th - 28th June, 2011

Manning Clarke Centre, Canberra

The incredibly successful convenors of the 2011 postgraduate training course were Wai Lim and Henry Pleass. There were a record number of delegates that included a mix of clinicians, scientists, nurse practitioners, specialist nurses and other professionals working in transplantation. The eight sessions over two days covered all pertinent areas of basic science and clinical transplantation, including surgical complications and history of transplantation. Although the focus was predominantly on kidney transplantation, sessions on liver and pancreas transplantation were very well received. It is of no coincidence that the majority of speakers were members of the society who like the convenors had kindly donated their time and expertise to share their insights.

2011 ASM Dinner

Thursday 30th June 2011

The National Gallery, Canberra



From top left: President's Prize (Scientific) winner Renee Robb, President's Prize (Clinical) winner Michael Collins, Ian McKenzie Prize winner A/Professor Steve Alexander with Professor Ian McKenzie, Mark Cocks TX Research Scholarship winner Allison Tong with Chris Thomas of Transplant Australia and TSANZ President A/Professor Frank Ierino.

The Inaugural TSANZ Fun Run/Walk

Thursday 30th June 2011

University House, Canberra





Bottom left to right: A/Professor Frank Ierino with Ms Yael Cass CEO of the Organ & Tissue Authority, Ms Diane Shultz, long standing kidney transplant recipient with Mr Tim Matthieson.

Membership

Since the last newsletter, Council welcomed the following new members:

TSANZ

Abrar Ali, Aric Bendorf, Tara Bull, Michael Burke, Clara Chan, Hicham Cheikh Hassan, Michael Chu, Eithne Cunningham, Rumbidzai Dahwa, Shyam Dheda, Sharon Ford, Anar Ganbold, Nicole Gauthier, Miriam Habib, Martin Howell, Victor Ilie, Arjun Iyer, George John, Gayathri Kumarasinghe, David Lau, Michelle Lewicki, David Liu, Andrew Mallett, Rosemary Masterson, Shenaaz Mazid, David Metz, Penny Morgan, Anna Munasinghe, Amit Nigam, Maya O'Brien, Moumita Paul, Lisa Phipps, Avi Raman, Kisha Sivanathan, Otto Strauss, Shaun Summers, Jeanette Villanueva, Zane Wang, John Whitlam, Michelle Wong and Nathan Zammit

TNA/TSANZ

Kelly Anstey, Elaine Chan, Elizabeth Craig, Susan Frew, Peta Gardner-Dixon, Sarah Gordon, Stephen Orr and Nigel Palk

ATCA/TSANZ

Margaret Johnston

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS

Professor Jeremy Chapman and Professor Anthony d'Apice

RESIGNATIONS

Since the last newsletter, Council has accepted the following resignations:

Carol Adams, Cherie Beck, Peter Campbell, Gianfranco Ferla, David Francis, Nicholas Gatt, Kylie Hamblin, Chris Inglis-Simons, Ming Ji, Mary Kelly, Graham Kyd, Vicki Levidiotis, Bernadette Madigan, Linda McGeown, Lauren Middlebrook, Suzanne Morey, Lisa Murray-Segal, Tharun Mysore, Douglas Parker, Claire Pollock, Michael Stephen and Patricia Wills

Society Awards and Grants

The Society provides a number of benefits for members, which include support to attend national and international transplantation meetings and reduced fees at meetings sponsored by the society.

The eligibility criteria for each award are outlined on the TSANZ website:

www.tsanz.com.au/awardsandfellowships/index.asp

Travel Grant Award Reports

The 13th World Congress of International Pancreas and Islet Transplant Association (IPITA) Prague, Czech Republic 1st – 4th June 2011

Fui Jiun Choong

I would like to thank TSANZ for the generous support by providing me the International Travel Grant to attend my first international conference, the 13th World Congress of IPITA in the enchanting city of Prague, Czech Republic, from 1-4 June 2011.

The 4 day conference is comprised of top quality symposiums, workshops, plenary sessions, oral and poster presentations. The conference began with two parallel symposiums for pancreas and islet transplantation. In particular, the symposium for islet transplantation highlighted several controversial issues. These include the differences in islet properties observed between rodent and human islets, which illustrate the need for cautious extrapolation of data derived from experiments using animal models to clinical application. Issues such as the effect of islet transplant donor variables

i.e age and body mass index, the varying efficiency of different enzyme blends on human islet isolation were also brought to the attention of the audience.

Throughout the conference, I was fascinated by talks given by high calibre professionals. A wide variety of topics relating to the latest development in islet transplant research were covered such as the introduction of new methods for quality assessment of islets, possible sources for beta cell regeneration, the progression of islet xenotransplantation and the advancement of islet immunoisolation.

In addition, I was fortunate to present part of my PhD work at the conference. I am glad that my first international presentation was well-received. The meeting gave me an overview of how the researchers and surgeons, work on different aspects of islet transplantation, and through their dedication and cooperation, to improve the outcome of clinical islet transplantation. I am proud that my studies contribute to the advancement of islet transplantation by unravelling the importance of islet microenvironment in preserving graft integrity and function. I am also delighted to meet the experts in the field of islet transplantation, namely, Camillo Ricordi, James Shapiro and Bernhard Hering. I am awed by their impressive presentation and extensive knowledge in islet transplantation.

This conference also provided me an opportunity to travel around Europe. Overall, the conference was truly an invaluable experience to me. I am now up to date with the latest progression of islet transplantation and inspired by world-class researchers and their outstanding achievements. I have come back fully rejuvenated and ready to face the challenge ahead. Once again, I am most indebted to TSANZ for this wonderful experience in my PhD. I am looking forward to sharing more exciting story about my work at the next conference.

Chris Drogemuller

I would like to thank TSANZ for the provision of a travel grant to attend the 13th World Congress of the International Pancreas and Islet Transplant Association held in Prague over the period June 1-4 this year. It provided me with a great opportunity to update the latest best practices in clinical islet transplantation for the treatment of type 1 diabetes.

During the previous 18 months of our clinical islet transplant program at the Royal Adelaide Hospital we have performed 8 islet infusions into 4 type 1 diabetic recipients. Attendance at the IPITA meeting provided me with the opportunity to compare the clinical outcomes of our program to other similar centres around the world. This began with the pre-congress symposium on the ongoing challenges of human islet isolation. Novel isolation protocols utilising various enzyme blends were presented, highlighting the gap

that still exists in our knowledge of how these enzyme blends work at the molecular level. Further advances in this area will be crucial if we are to successfully tailor isolation protocols to match different donor organs (marginal donors vs. ideal donors vs. young donors).

Garth Warnock, Vancouver Canada presented a great talk comparing islet transplantation alone to best medical therapy. Testing of several key markers of secondary complications in type 1 diabetes revealed recipients of islet transplants had improved cardiac and renal function, improved retinal blood flow and increased peripheral nerve conduction suggesting that islet transplantation can slow down or prevent progression of these complications.

Some of the recent long term insulin independence data from the leading islet transplant centres around the world was also presented. Several centres are achieving insulin independence rates at 5 years >75% and c-peptide positive rates >90%. Comparable to outcomes achieved with whole pancreas transplants minus the morbidity and mortality associated with this procedure. Data presented from the CITR highlighted the use of T-cell depleting agents in addition to TNF-alpha inhibition correlates strongly with achieving insulin independence in islet transplant recipients. James Shapiro presented data from his group showing similar insulin independence and c-peptide positive rates as above using single donor transplants, a significant advancement in single donor outcomes.

One of the most interesting presentations I attended was given by Pedro Herrera, Geneva Switzerland. He presented work from his group looking at α to β cell trans-differentiation in mice. By employing gene therapy approaches to enable selective depletion of pancreatic β cells using a single dose of diphtheria toxin they were able to show that indeed α cells can undergo trans-differentiation into β cells within the mouse pancreas. Furthermore by labelling all β cells with a fluorescent marker prior to depletion they were able to confirm that the new β cells were not derived from any remaining β cells that avoided depletion undergoing neogenesis. The final proof came when they labelled the α cells with a second fluorescent marker which was shown to be present in the new β cell population following depletion of the native β cells. The experimental design used to answer this question was quite exquisite and the results eloquently presented. It was a fascinating presentation.

Once again I would like to thank TSANZ for this fantastic opportunity to attend the major

international conference in islet transplantation IPITA.

Clare Mee

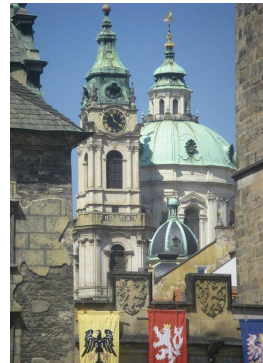
I would like to take this opportunity to extend a big thanks to the TSANZ council for awarding me a travel grant. This grant enabled me to attend and present my work at the 13th World Congress of IPITA - International Pancreas and Islet Transplant Association held June 1-4 2011 in Prague, Czech Republic. As predicted, the meeting was absolutely brilliant - on every level. Excellent clinical and basic science sessions, and a small amount of time for sight-seeing in a stunning city! I was also able to take advantage of a rare opportunity to visit the Oxford Islet Transplant Centre after the meeting.

Clinical islet transplantation has advanced significantly in the last 5-10 years. James Shapiro, a leader in the islet field from Edmonton - Canada, presented 5 year follow up on clinical islet transplantation. He revealed that the "gap" between pancreas transplant and islet transplant had closed as we are now seeing comparable results with the regard to graft survival and insulin independence. 77% of islet transplant recipients are insulin independent at 5 years. He presented a 52% "Kaplan Meier Survival" compared to only 10% using the original "Edmonton" Protocol published in 1999-2000. A randomised controlled trial is the next step to making islet transplantation an established treatment for severe hypo-unaware type 1 diabetic patients.

As in most transplant settings, donor shortages will continue to be a barrier for islet cell transplantation and alternative treatments are under investigation. A basic science plenary talk entitled "Alpha to Beta cell transdifferentiation" presented by Pedro Herrera from Geneva was quite fascinating. A transgenic mouse model of autoimmune diabetes (RIP-DTR) was developed, and after greater than 99% beta cell loss, over time, he was able to show "regeneration" of insulin producing cells. Using beta cell ablation, together with cell lineage tracing analysis, he was able to explore the cellular origins of these "new" insulin producing cells. They were in fact re-programmed alpha cells producing insulin and other beta cell markers. In addition, immunohistochemistry images that Herrera presented showed that both insulin and glucagon were being co-expressed in the same cells. So, perhaps if we were able to modulate the immune system, type 1 diabetic patients may in future be able to "transdifferentiate" their own glucagon producing alpha cells.

After the meeting in Prague, I also took the opportunity to visit the Islet Transplant Centre in Oxford, UK. This transplant centre was established in 2007 and has performed 20+ transplants to date, similar to that of the Australian Islet Transplant Consortium. Steve Hughes, the Facility Manager in

Oxford, took me on a tour of the "state of the art" clean room facilities. I presented the Australian clinical data, and Sarah Cross presented the Oxford clinical and experimental data. I was able to spend one on one time with Steve Hughes and discuss technical aspects of human islet isolation, compare the Australian experience, and he was also kind enough share their protocols with us. Overall, visiting the Oxford centre was a very valuable experience for me. I believe the islet transplant field will continue to succeed with the aid of its strong international collaborations.



On our search for the best beer in Prague, we also managed to stumble across the largest Ricordi Chamber in the world, complete with heating/cooling coils! Strangely, the Czech's use them for brewing beer!!

Daisy Mohanasundaram

I would like to thank and appreciate the TSANZ for awarding the travel grant which enabled me to attend the 13th World congress of IPITA (International Pancreas and Islet Transplant Association) held in Prague, Czech Republic from June 1-4, 2011. It gave me an opportunity to present two of my posters on islet zinc transporters and glucose transporter. It also enabled me to enrich my knowledge from the excellent work and the presentations that has been presented each day of the plenary session and other parallel session.

Experience of different centres on islet isolation and transplantation from other countries broadened the knowledge. Experience of Uppsala given by D.Brandhorst on available collagenase enzymes on human islet isolation on collagenolytic and non collagenolytic proteases was good. Following that the experience of Minnesota shared by Balamurugan on importance of neutral protease on islet yield was good to improve islet isolation. Quality assessment of islet preparation by Goto using Scanning electron microscopy was very Novel and good way to see individual islet's glucose stimulated respiratory activity. World

experience on whole pancreas transplantation and islet cell transplantation comparison revealed the improvements of islet cell transplantation as treatment from clinical trial.

The session on Xenotransplantation as future of islet transplantation given by Herring, Cooper and O'Connell was very impressive to know and understand the progress that was made in Xenotransplantation of pig islets. The development of transgenic pigs and the achievement to overcome the limitations in Xenotransplantation was very promising.

Plenary talks on regenerative medicine for type 1 diabetes were very interesting section. Specially the talk given by P.L. Herrera on Alpha to beta cell transdifferentiation was very novel and good work on basic islet biology. This work was on the deletion of beta cells from mice islets and exploring the cellular origin of new beta cells. It was shown that the majority of the newly formed beta cells were indeed reprogrammed glucagon producing alpha cell that started to transdifferentiate into beta cells spontaneously. The other research topics on mesenchymal stem cells for the improvement or replacement of islet cell transplantation were very interesting. Overall the conference was very potential and broadened my knowledge in islet transplantation and in islet biology research. Once again I thank the TSANZ for giving me this award.

Daniella Penko

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the TSANZ for awarding me a travel grant that allowed me to attend the 13th International Pancreas and Islet Transplant Association World Congress. The conference was held at the Corinthia Hotel in the picturesque city of Prague. The travel grant gave me the opportunity to show much of the research from my Honours year on incorporating rat endothelial progenitor cells into mosaic islet clusters with the aim of promoting pancreatic islet engraftment.

The conference covered a broad range of topics in pancreas and islet transplantation, both clinical and experimental. My work being dominantly in islet research, it was great to listen to some of the talks that focused on the clinical side of islet transplantation. In addition to this, I found it interesting to hear presentations from people such as Camillo Ricordi and James Shapiro, which have been so influential within the field of islet transplantation. Another presentation I found interesting titled 'Generation of pancreas-spheres from human embryonic stem cells', which demonstrated the differentiation of human embryonic stem cells into beta-like cells using a four step protocol.

I really enjoyed the poster sessions, the relaxed environment allowed for more open discussion. In particular, it was great to see other projects like mine, however, using different approaches to improve islet engraftment. A poster I found particularly interesting titled 'Molecularly engineered islet cell clusters for diabetes mellitus treatment' where islet clusters were formed following the delivery of an insulinitropic protein aiming to reduce hypoxia induced apoptosis.

Once again, I want to thank TSANZ for a memorable experience in which I gained much knowledge.

European Group for Blood and Marrow Transplantation Paris, 3rd–6th April 2011

Renee Robb

I would like to thank TSANZ for the travel grant that allowed me to attend the annual conference of the European Group for Blood and Marrow Transplantation in Paris from 3-6 April this year.

The conference was held in the Palais des congrès which is in the centre of Paris and it was great to be able to combine a hectic conference schedule with sightseeing. I was fortunate that my jetlag recovery day fell on the one Sunday in each month where admission to all museums in Paris is free, although this did make queues much longer.

The conference was comprised of 10-15 concurrent sessions, with each aimed at target audiences that included patients, families, nurses, clinicians and scientists. This was the first conference I have attended where such a broad audience is catered for, and the exposure to presentations targeted at other people involved in BMT was great.

Personally, the highlight of the meeting was the presentation by Jamie Ferrara from Michigan who presented data investigating metabolic requirements of activated T cells after Bone Marrow Transplantation, which are responsible for the development of detrimental graft-versus-host disease. Recent findings by his group have demonstrated that T cells responsible for graft versus host disease exhibit increased mitochondrial stress, and apoptosis can be selectively induced in these cells by inhibiting ATP synthase in the mitochondria. This is a novel strategy to alleviate GVHD. While it was interesting to attend sessions aimed at clinicians, I

still found the basic science sessions most enjoyable.

The conference dinner was held at the Moulin Rouge and it was a great night that allowed me to put faces to names in an informal environment. The dancing was also interesting, although the distinct lack of clothing did lead to some awkward moments.

Overall, having the opportunity to present data at an international meeting was a great experience and once again, I would like to thank TSANZ for their support.

Calendar of Events

TSANZ/ASI WORKSHOP

Adelaide Convention Centre
Sunday 11th December 2011

TSANZ-ASI Travel award application form and details of submission can be found on the TSANZ website.

Abstract deadline for the main meeting is September 30th (www.asi2011.org)

TSANZ POST GRADUATE TRAINING COURSE

Manning Clark Centre
ANU, Canberra
25th – 26th June, 2012
Website: www.tsanz.com.au

TSANZ ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING

Manning Clark Centre
ANU, Canberra
27th – 29th June 2012
Website: www.tsanz.com.au

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