

59th Annual Conference of the British Microcirculation Society Conference, 2009 held at the University of Birmingham, UK



The host, Dr Neena Kalia, welcomes delegates along with Mrs Gayle Halford, PhD student Ian Holyer and postdoc Dean Kavanagh

Having last hosted the annual BMS meeting in 1997, the University of Birmingham was once again proud to welcome the 59th conference of the Society to its new and splendid Medical School facilities. Delegates were welcomed by Professor Ian Booth, Dean of the Medical School, and the host Dr Neena Kalia, who thanked them for making it the most well attended and financially profitable meeting of the Society.



Professor Jon Frampton (University of Birmingham) kick started the designated symposium which this year was on 'Stem Cells in the Vasculature'. His introduction provided an unbiased overview on the hype and reality of stem cell research for both the experts and non-experts. The hype was highlighted using tabloid articles, including one from the *Sun* (yes, that well known Scientific Journal we all aspire to publish in!), which only that day published a piece on how stem cells could be used to 'enhance bums and boobs'...

When thinking of stem cells in the vasculature, endothelial progenitor cells immediately come to mind. Perhaps, therefore it was surprising to many to hear Professor Petri Salven's (University of Helsinki) presentation in which he provided evidence that endothelial progenitor cells do not contribute to

tumor neoangiogenesis, thus refuting data from over 50 published papers. The cat was set amongst pigeons, but judging from the backlash, I would say the pigeons certainly had their day!

Symposium speakers identified new regulatory factors impacting upon hematopoietic stem cell (HSC) trafficking, with Professor Steffen Massberg (University of Munich) identifying an important role for platelets in guiding stem cells to sites of vessel injury. Professor Tsvee Lapidot (Weismann Institute, Israel) illustrated the importance of integrating research from different disciplines by demonstrating how interactions between the nervous and immune systems regulated the role of HSCs in host defence and repair.

Birmingham's very own stem cell research featured extensively with symposium, free and poster communications from 10 of our finest senior and junior researchers. Dr Phil Newsome (Consultant Hepatologist, University of Birmingham) emphasised that despite their clinical regenerative potential, adult stem cells could also contribute to the development of liver scarring/fibrosis – so not all that glitters (according to the *Sun*!) is gold.



Professor Malcolm Reed, University of Sheffield, receives the BMS Clinical Lecture Award from BMS President, Professor Giovanni Mann and Andreas Gigler, Promocell.

In a move to increase the participation of clinical researchers at the BMS conferences, Professor Malcolm Reed (Consultant Surgeon, University of Sheffield) was invited to give the BMS's inaugural clinical lecture. The current effectiveness of anti-angiogenic strategies for cancer treatment and future developments were discussed.

The Conference Banquet, held at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens and Glasshouses, was a huge success with the gently lit scenic gardens enjoyed by



7 of the 12 winners of the BMS student assistance travel awards – are girls better in Science or is it just an un-representative photo!

delegates, on what turned out to be a glorious evening (glorious for Brum in March anyway). Conversation flowed over



a slow roasted shoulder of lamb and good wine aplenty. Live Latin jazz music permeated the venue, quite loudly for some, leading to inadvertent playing of Chinese Whispers around the dinner tables! By the end of the evening, the old Victorian Ballroom was once again buzzing with enthusiastic dancers – hopeless at salsa, though probably too 'under the influence' to realise!



Winners of Promocell and BMS funded poster prizes and the Moor Instruments award for research conducted using novel technology.

Dr Kalia would like to use this opportunity to thank the BHF, Wellcome Trust, Physiological Society and the numerous Trade Exhibitors for generously providing sponsorships and funding for this event.

Dr Neena Kalia

Lecturer in Microcirculation Research, The Medical School, University of Birmingham
n.kalia@bham.ac.uk