

Julianne Feola
Laboratory of Dr. Gail Johnson

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Graduate Women in Science Travel Award Report

I am very appreciative of the support that I received from the Graduate Women in Science Travel Award. This award allowed me to attend an extremely beneficial Gordon Research Conference (GRC) entitled “Transglutaminases in Human Disease Processes” from June 29th-July 4th, 2014 in Lucca, Italy. This conference was exactly relevant to my thesis work on the role of transglutaminase 2 in mediating ischemic stroke damage. The support that I received aided greatly my being able to participate in this international conference, and for that I am extremely grateful.

The GRC was a relatively small meeting compared to others that I have attended. This easily allowed me the opportunity to have meaningful discussions with a number of individuals in the field, many of whom have extensive knowledge of and expertise in studying the role of transglutaminases in human diseases. I had the opportunity to engage in scientific discussions with many faculty members, graduate students, post-docs and even representatives from biopharmaceutical companies. These conversations were extremely valuable, as they helped me to generate new ideas for my project and also see the field from different perspectives. I had many opportunities for these discussions over the five days that we were there, at poster sessions, during meals and coffee breaks, and even at some GRC-sponsored social events.

In addition to the meaningful discussions, I also attended a variety of scientific presentations. I heard talks from many experts in the field, some of which were directly relevant to my particular research and others that, while quite different, were still able to teach me new things that I could apply to my current work. As I mentioned above, I also spoke with many students and post-docs at the daily poster sessions. This was another excellent way to meet people and engage in thoughtful discourse.

Finally, I also had the opportunity to present my own work at one of the poster sessions, with a poster entitled “The Dual Role of Transglutaminase 2 in Ischemic Neurons and Astrocytes”. This was one of the most beneficial experiences of the conference, as I was able to share the work that I have been doing with experts in the field, as well as with other students. I received valuable feedback from the people that I met and have come away with new ideas for the direction of my project. Overall, my experience at the GRC was truly rewarding, as I was able to discuss science with a variety of people and share my work in a small and focused setting.