

On January 28th through February 2nd of this year, 2023, I attended the International Society for Optics and Photonics (SPIE) West Conference in San Francisco, California. This is a large conference with thousands of attendees. My interesting conversations started on the plane enroute to San Francisco. Seated next to me was a professor from Albany, NY and her student. They shared their research with me, using Raman spectroscopy and FRET techniques to study iron transfer and binding interactions in breast cancer cells. Additionally, during my layover in Detroit, MI, I met students from Duke University who work on optical coherence tomography and were also going to the conference.

At the conference, there were many groups and sessions highlighting the importance of data science. Dr. Michael Chiang, the director of the National Eye Institute, highlighted the ways in which data classification models can unify diagnoses in eye disorders. Dr. Stephen Boppart showed how machine learning can be used to identify cell types in multiphoton imaging. These tools are not intended to replace clinicians, but to aid in the process of diagnosing and treating patients.

In addition to endless talks and sessions, there were opportunities to meet scientists from all over the world. I connected with other graduate students from Greece, India, China, Israel, and more. A group of us got lunch in Chinatown to see who could handle the spiciest noodles. I also met venture capitalists, entrepreneurs and data scientists. Some of my new connections were at the talk that I presented. The questions that I received after my talk were insightful and connected to newer data that I have been working on in lab. Attending this conference was a great experience, and I'm grateful to GWIS for supporting my attendance.

