

The Microscopy Microscience Congress, 2015 (mmc2015) was held at the Manchester Central centre, in a rare week of beautiful weather, between 29th June and 2nd July. As the world's first industrial city, and rich history of scientific research it was the perfect backdrop for this conference. The conference itself has grown year on year, and this time with over 1300 delegates, it was one of the largest of its kind. The agenda spanned the whole range of microscopy, with six parallel sessions on topics as varied as microbiology, nuclear physics, and oncology. In addition to the presentations and posters, a series of practical workshops and a massive commercial exhibition area allowed delegates to learn even more about the latest developments in microscopy.

This was my first time presenting at an international conference during my PhD. On Tuesday, I presented a poster entitled *Discovering Markers of Rare Fibrillar Collagen Diseases in Connective Tissues at the Nanoscale*. During the poster session, I was able to receive a range of feedback from students, academics and exhibitors, including several famous researchers in the field of microscopy. This was a great opportunity not only to get feedback on my poster, but on the direction my PhD is taking as a whole. I was able to sound out some more experienced researchers, some of whom have given me some extremely valuable advice. One area where I was given a few invaluable ideas was in sample preparation, which can be so crucial when trying to obtain a publication-quality image. Allied to this was the image competition, where the finalists of the *RMS International Scientific Imaging Competition* had their images exhibited. The interplay between scientific and artistic merit was clear to see, with the highly commended finalists managing to get the balance right, showing how successful an image can be in both disparate fields.

The networking opportunities at such a large conference can never be understated. In addition to talking to fellow delegates during the poster sessions, the SPM section organised a dinner and drinks at an Italian restaurant, *Don Giovanni* after the poster session. This provided a chance to network with other colleagues in a more relaxed and informal environment. Bringing the related field together in a friendly way allowed me to meet several experts in fields I would have otherwise missed. As a result of some of those connections, I attended talks on material science and ptychography which helped broaden my scientific understanding and awareness.

Broadening my scientific understanding was what I took away the most from the conference. Whether it was new routes for development of my PhD or innovative topics presented by other researchers, I found the whole of mmc2015 to be thoroughly beneficial, worthwhile and enjoyable. Thanks are owed to mmc2015 and RMS for organising the event and to UCL for its funding of my PhD.

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