

## PARTECIPATION REPORT FOR GSCN TRAVEL AWARD

3rd International Conference on Stem Cell Chania, Crete, Greece – 3rd to 8th October 2019

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The 3rd International Conference on Stem Cell this year took place in a little village close to Chania, the second biggest city in the Greek island Crete. Around 100 participants attended the conference divided into trainees, professors, and company employees.

The conference was divided into nine sessions, covering many aspects of stem cell research, like Stem Cell Niche, Organogenesis, iPSC and disease. As a Ph.D. student interested in the neural stem cell research, I was really fascinated by many talks closely related to my project. For instance, the presentation from Dr. Jenny Hsieh about the use of brain organoids as a model for neurodevelopmental disorders like epilepsy, was very interesting. Dr. Hsieh and her team mostly focus on a specific gene, ARX, which mutation has been related to several brain disorders. Thanks to the iPSC technology, they have been able to generate cortical organoids from patients with ARX mutations in order to compare them with organoids derived from healthy donors. With this approach, they enlightened alterations at structural and molecular level in patients-derived organoids. Taken together, the data presented gave more insights on the role of ARX mutations on the pathological mechanisms in specific brain diseases. Another impressive talk focused on neural stem cells was for sure the one of Dr. Evan Snyder, who presented the most recent data about the mechanism of action of lithium in bipolar disorder. Specifically, his research is aimed to elucidate and predict the responsiveness of the patient, a very hot topic in psychopharmacology. All in all, the conference offered several outstanding talks from world-wide known researchers in the stem cell field, like Magdalena Zernicka-Goetz, Laurie Boyer, Jacob Hanna, and Claudia Waskow and all of them were inspiring and fascinating.

One main aspect of the International Conference on Stem Cell was the explicit intention to create an informal atmosphere to increase as much as possible the scientific interaction between and after the sessions. This was managed perfectly through a carefully designed program. Every lunch and dinner was organized to keep the participants together and facilitate the social interaction and the scientific exchange. Personally, this has been a fundamental aspect, since I have been able to speak with most of the participants and expand my scientific network. For example, I established new collaborations and discussed possible projects that might help me in the last years of my Ph.D and my future career.

I would highly recommend to anyone working in the stem cell field to attend this conference. The international environment and the high-level projects presented makes it perfect to have a broad overview of all the research that happens world-wide. Additionally, and especially for trainees, the possibility to speak with prestigious professors in an informal atmosphere is a unique opportunity to enrich every participant on a scientific, professional and also personal level.

I would like to thank the GSCN committee for choosing me as a Travel Award Winner since the financial support has been fundamental to be enable the participation at this conference.

Sincerely,

