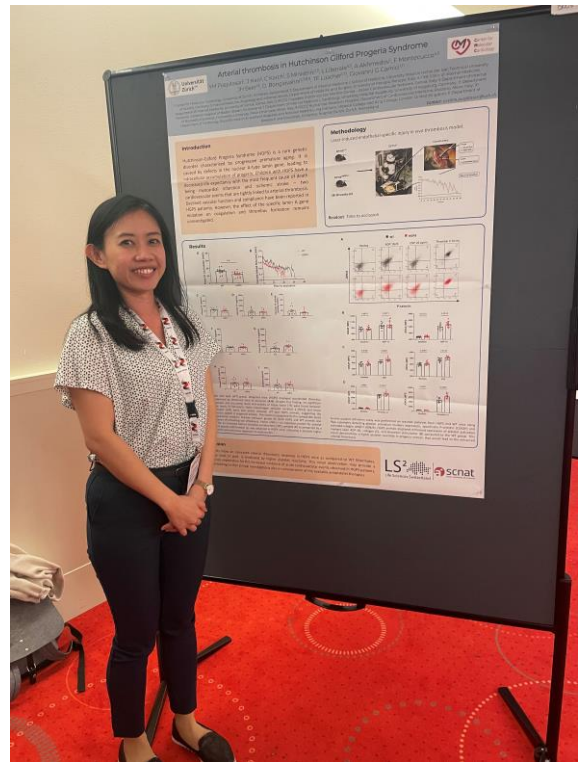


## RE(ACT) Congress and IRDiRC Conference

15 – 18 March 2023, Hotel Melia, Berlin, Germany.

As someone who dedicates her PhD journey and works in cardiovascular research, it never passed my mind that I would try so hard to find and attend any congresses focusing on rare and orphan diseases. But, life is full of surprises, as always. It all started with a small side project investigating arterial thrombosis in a rare disease Hutchinson-Gilford Progeria Syndrome, which became very interesting and exciting. The excitement pushed me to spread this project to the more relevant research groups and communities, which are distinct from our usual cardiovascular research community. Therefore, without any hesitation, we submitted our abstract to the rare disease congress, RE(ACT), and indeed, it got accepted for both poster and oral presentation! With a generous support from Life Science Switzerland (LS2), I had a wonderful chance to attend this congress and share our study.



RE(ACT) congress is annually organized by BLACKSWAN foundation and the international rare disease consortium, IRDiRC, which are two leading organizations in Switzerland and European Union focusing on rare and orphan diseases. This event, specifically RE(ACT) congress, is held with the aim of gathering scientific leaders and experts to work collaboratively in the development of research on rare and orphan diseases. This year, RE(ACT) congress was held from 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> March 2023 in Berlin, Germany. This congress focuses on finding a multidisciplinary solution for patients and families with rare diseases. We could get new updates on novel promising therapies and clinical trial results, promising medical devices that can improve the quality of life of those patients, as well as discuss the obstacles the clinicians and policymakers need to face in practice.

Overall, attending this conference was an eye-opening experience as I obtained knowledge outside the cardiovascular field, which is very refreshing, in my opinion. Moreover, it was an honor to represent Life University of Zurich, Life Science Switzerland, and the Swiss Academy of Sciences in this meeting. Therefore, once again, I would like to express my gratitude to Life Science Switzerland for sponsoring this valuable experience.

Yustina Puspitasari

**Laura Catharina Hinte (ETH Zurich)**  
**EMBL Epigenetics and Chromatin 2023, EMBL Heidelberg, Germany,**  
**May 15-18 2023**  
**lhinte@ethz.ch**

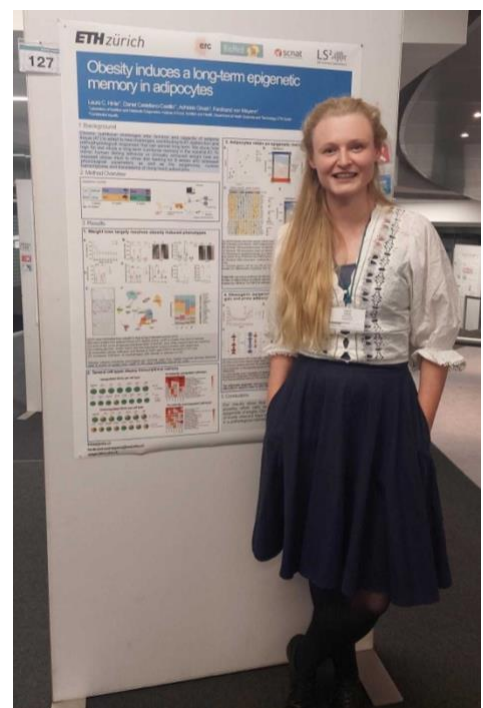
Thanks to the financial support of Life Sciences Switzerland (LS2) and the Swiss Academy of Sciences (SCNAT) I was able to attend the 11<sup>th</sup> EMBL Epigenetics and Chromatin conference this year. This meeting is the largest of its kind in Europe and serves as a meeting hub for the ever growing, diverse European and worldwide epigenetics research community.

The conference takes place at the ATC building on the EMBL campus close to Heidelberg thereby setting the perfect stage for this international meeting of world leading epigeneticists. As it is customary for EMBL conferences all events including talks, lunches, dinners and social events took place on the campus and we participants were transported to the venue with EMBL shuttle busses. I had never visited EMBL before and was impressed with the campus and research infrastructure available. I am seriously considering doing my PostDoc at EMBL now.

The three and a half days of the conference were filled with over 50 talks from on the one hand established leading scientists such as Steven Henikoff, Asifa Akhtar, Sarah Teichmann, Imbrahim Cissé or keynote speaker and founder of this conference Genevieve Almouzni and on the other hand junior group leaders from various European, American and Asian research institutions. The field of epigenetics is as diverse as it is interdisciplinary with topics ranging from super resolution imaging of enhancer-promoter interactions, via the role of a histone demethylase in schizophrenia, to uncovering the impact of alternative splicing of chromatin modifiers on gene repression. Specifically, this diversity of topics enlightened me and opened my eyes for other domains of epigenetic research that I had not been aware of beforehand.

During the poster sessions I presented my work and engaged in active discussion with other participants on the directions my project could take and its implications for society and health care. While I have presented my work at metabolism/obesity focused smaller meetings before it was extremely rewarding to discuss my work with epigenetic researchers to get input on methodological and technical aspects of my project which focuses on the emergence of obesogenic epigenetic memory in adipocytes and the potential future impacts of this memory.

Overall, I can highly recommend attending an EMBL conference because it they are extremely well organized, the organization team is very kind and helpful, the location is beautiful, and the research community connected to EMBL is inspiring.



**Pauline Franz, Fierz laboratory, EPFL**  
GRC Histone and DNA modifications, RI, USA

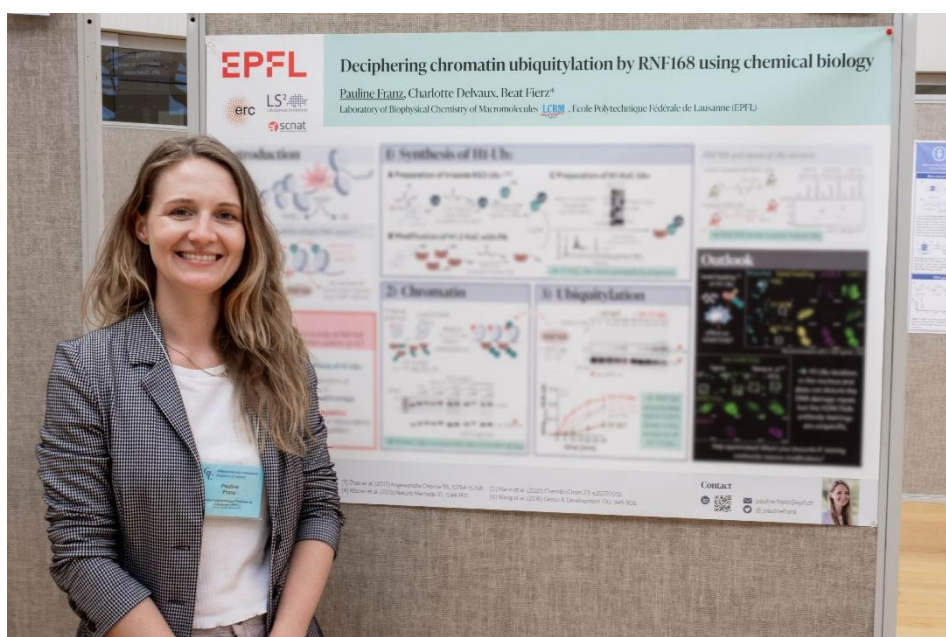
I would like to thank Life Sciences Switzerland (LS2) and the Swiss Academy of Sciences (SCNAT) for giving me the opportunity to participate in the Gordon Research Conference (GRC) on Histone and DNA modifications at Bryant University, Smithfield, Rhode Island, USA which took place from 11<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> June 2023. GRC conferences are designed to maximize the interaction with other participants by selecting a remote location, having a small number of participants (approx. 100), and having a high PI/student ratio. Thus, I was traveling with high anticipation.

Prior to the conference, while I was studying the speaker and poster list, I already identified speakers and participants whom I wanted to talk to at the conference. Since the conference was comparatively small, I could attend every session. The quality of the research present was cutting-edge and novel (to a large extent unpublished), which placed this conference at the forefront of sharing high-impact research data. My highlights of the talks (excluding my PI's talk) were from Shannon Lauberth, Scott Rothbart, Yael David, and Song Tan. However, only the informal discussions during breaks or poster sessions provided the full "in-person" conference experience.

During the first two poster sessions, I presented my PhD work "Deciphering chromatin ubiquitylation by RNF168 using chemical biology". The poster sessions were very interactive and full of constructive feedback and questions. The only downside really was that I had a sore throat after talking for two hours straight. Also, many PIs looking for Postdocs were actively recruiting during the poster session, making it a great opportunity to identify potential future labs.

Additionally, I had ample chances to network within the field. The evening sessions lasted until 9.30 pm, and afterwards, a large part of the crowd joined for a drink before going to bed. I made many new connections among peers, which are very enriching on a personal and professional level.

Attending this conference was an exciting and enriching experience and helped me define my next professional steps when I graduate next year. Thus, I would like to thank LS2 and SCNAT again for their generous support.



# Conference Report: 2023 European Society of Human Genetics Conference

Saadat Varnosfaderanii

## 1. Introduction:

The European Society of Human Genetics (ESHG) is an annual conference which was held from 10-13 June in Glasgow this year. This report aims to summarize the key highlights, themes, and advancements presented during the conference.

## 2. Key Themes and Topics:

The conference covered a wide range of topics related to human genetics, genomics, and their implications for healthcare and society. Some of the key themes discussed included:

### a) Precision Medicine and Personalized Genomics:

Advancements in precision medicine and personalized genomics were extensively explored. Researchers presented cutting-edge techniques and technologies that allow for tailored medical interventions based on an individual's genetic makeup. The potential of genomic data in predicting disease susceptibility, drug response, and treatment outcomes was a prominent area of discussion.

### b) Genomic Research and Technologies:

The conference showcased the latest breakthroughs in genomic research and technologies. Researchers shared their findings on genome sequencing, variant discovery, and functional genomics, emphasizing the impact these advancements have on understanding genetic disorders, complex traits, and population genetics.

### c) Ethical, Legal, and Social Implications (ELSI) of Genetics:

Recognizing the importance of responsible and ethical practices in genetics, the conference dedicated sessions to discuss the ELSI aspects. Topics such as genetic privacy, consent, genetic discrimination, and the challenges of implementing genetic testing and counseling were explored, encouraging thoughtful dialogue among researchers, clinicians, and policymakers.

### d) Clinical Applications of Genetics:

The conference highlighted the clinical applications of genetics in diagnosing and treating various genetic disorders. Presentations included updates on the use of genetic testing, genetic counseling, and the integration of genomics into routine healthcare practices. The role of genetics in oncology, rare diseases, and prenatal screening garnered significant attention.

## 3. Networking and Collaboration Opportunities:

The conference facilitated networking and collaboration among participants through dedicated networking sessions. These opportunities allowed researchers, clinicians, and industry professionals to exchange ideas, initiate collaborations, and forge new partnerships.

## 4. My contribution:

In the conference, I presented a poster on our recent work regarding the role of human genomics in determining the severity of hepatitis E virus. Multiple researchers showed interest in our study, resulting in exchanging knowledge and establishing potential future collaboration.

## 5. Conclusion:

The 2023 ESHG conference proved to be a remarkable platform for exchanging knowledge, showcasing advancements, and fostering collaborations in the field of human genetics.

## 6. Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Life Sciences Switzerland (LS2) and Swiss Academy of Sciences (SCNAT) for awarding me the travel grant.

**Joel Tuomaala, University of Bern, joel.tuomaala@unibe.ch**

24th International *C. elegans* Conference, June 24-28, 2023, Glasgow, Scotland

With the travel grant awarded by the Life Sciences Switzerland (LS2) and the Swiss Academy of Sciences (SCNAT) I was able to present my work in the worlds largest *C. elegans* conference. The weeklong aptly named International *C. elegans* Conference is organized by the Genetics Society of America and brings together 2000 multidisciplinary researchers from all around the world who all share the microscopic worm *C. elegans* as their model organism of choice.

*C. elegans* is an ideal tool for studying biological phenomena in a multicellular animal where the tissue and organ specific responses that cannot be observed on the cellular level may be critically important for the animal welfare, thus overcoming many of the limitations of cell culture studies. I study the ability of *C. elegans* to trade stress resistance for faster growth rate and gave a presentation of that topic titled **“Preferential autophagy at an organismal scale balances starvation survival and recovery trade-off”**.

Apart from presenting the scientific findings of my PhD studies with the wider worm community, I met with authors who had published recent work relevant to our research. The recent publications had inspired ideas of possible collaborative projects, and now we were able to meet the authors and discuss our collaboration ideas. This led to starting preparations for future international collaborations. There was also a chance to discuss our imaging setup designs with research groups using similar technologies, which in turn led to novel ideas for improving our microfluidic imaging chips. Finally, the poster session in particular was a place to meet current and past colleagues, and to encounter topics one would otherwise miss. Several posters presented surprising improvements to experimental practices that we could potentially adopt in our laboratory to improve the quality of our experiments.

Overall, the trip was very successful in sharing our results, connecting with other scientists doing similar research, and forwarding our current and future research through national and international collaboration.



Owais Hameed, University of Fribourg

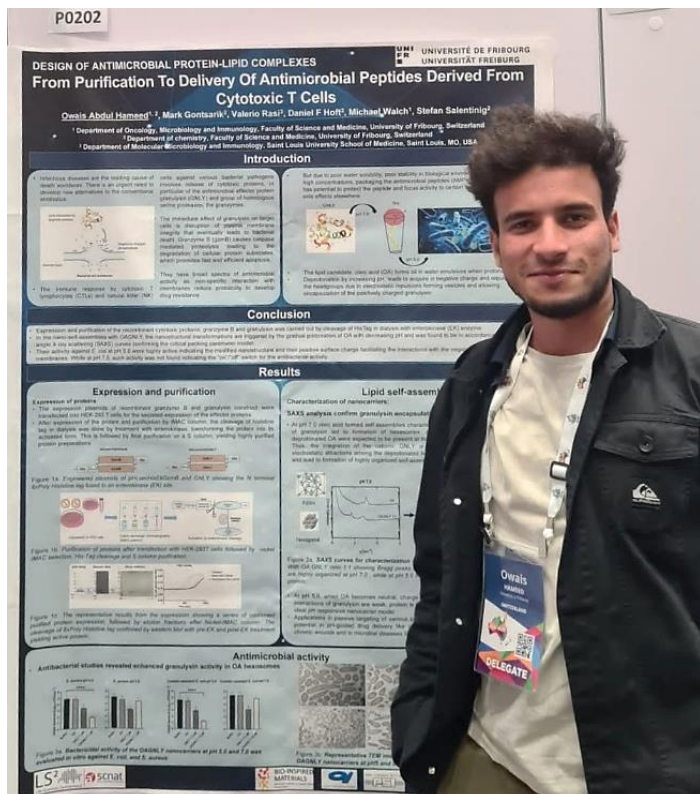
26th IUCr 2023, Melbourne, 22- 29 August 2023

Grateful to the LS2 Travel grant allowing me to travel to the land of Kangaroos and experience firsthand the wonders of this continent. Being there reminded me the great scientific achievements extending from Howard Florey's contribution to the first antibiotic to Sir William Lawrence Bragg's law of X-ray diffraction. Awestruck by the international presence at the conference especially from the part of the world far from Europe.

Sessions and various talks at the meeting revealed the intricacies of this fascinating science crystallography, its broad complexities that has yet to be fully understood in wide range of fields. Listening to the speakers and discussing their methods and work during the poster sessions was a great place to learn what beholds in these powerful techniques of analysis used in crystallography. The discussions at the lunch and conference dinners were a splendid excuse to network and create collabs for the future. I was personally amazed by Jenny Martin's presentation of Why we are crystallographers and what we do. Made me feel proud and humbled at the same time.

The opportunity to present at this conference was immense where a diverse platform offering pre-congress workshops, inspiring plenary talks. The lineup of different enterprises showcasing their new techs was also interesting with possibilities to update your tech knowledge. I got some intriguing feedback where people were super interested about my work which definitely boosts your curiosity. I also got a chance to chair the session: Lipid self-assemblies, which I think was an awesome experience.

In the end I am extremely thankful to LS2 for this opportunity and their generous support. The experience in Melbourne and the region of Victoria was indeed mind-blowing, I got to learn so much on the culture, history and at the same time fascinating science being done there!



## LS<sup>2</sup> travel grant report of Ettore Vanni (University of Geneva)

The International Society for Heart Research (ISHR) is one of the most important organization in the field of cardiac metabolism. The travel grant provided me by the Life Science Switzerland (LS2) and Swiss Academy of Sciences (SCANT) allows me to participate to the 37<sup>th</sup> edition of the ISHR-European Section meeting which was held in Porto, Portugal, from 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

The four days of sessions were focused on the use of cardiac metabolism as a strategy for cardioprotection. In these sessions many important experts of the field presented their work, showing how restoring the myocardial metabolic flexibility could preserve the heart from ischemic damage a development of several cardiac pathology associated with metabolic diseases such as obesity and type 2 diabetes mellitus. This session was followed by a very interesting discussion on the involvement of cardiac metabolism during the onset of heart failure in the context of diabetic cardiomyopathy. The other sessions of this meeting focused on the

In this meeting, I had the opportunity to show my research and data during a poster presentation where I explained the mechanism by which FA-derived lysine acetylation is able to impair glucose metabolism in cardiomyocytes. This type of post-translational modification has been associated in many metabolic diseases and is part of the complicated process by which loss of metabolic flexibility induces cardiac hypertrophy and heart failure, leading to impaired cardiac function and increasing myocardial susceptibility to ischemic injury. The interesting discussion during the presentation of my results to experts on the field helped me to further develop my project and gave me inputs for new experiments and investigations.

Moreover, the lunch/dinner meeting and the social event organized by the host of the ISHR in Porto allowed me to meet new investigators and enlarge my network connection. Mostly, thanks to this LS2 travel grant I was able to find a postdoctoral position which allows me to continue my research on the field of cardiac metabolism at the University of Louvain in Brussels.

In summary, I would like to express my gratitude to the LS2 committee for granting me the travel award. This support allowed me to enjoy this opportunity to present alongside several international scientists at various stages of their careers and enabled me to establish a valuable scientific network for my future career.



## LS<sup>2</sup> Travel Grant Report

**Miguel Correia**

**Department of Endocrinology, Metabolism and Cardiovascular System, University of Fribourg**

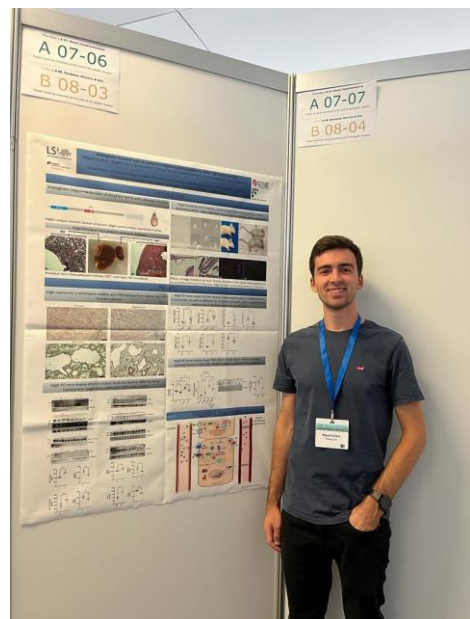
Between the 21<sup>st</sup> and the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, I had the chance to attend the 102<sup>nd</sup> Annual German Physiological Society meeting, which took place in Berlin.

At the meeting I was able to be updated by the latest advances of other Physiology groups, including getting to know novel techniques and methods for improving my own research. This international meeting was the largest I've ever visited during my academic life, and it was very humbling to attend talks given by the experts in the Physiology field.

For this meeting, the organization committee selected my work to be presented in a poster format, which allowed me to present my latest results to a very large and varied audience, which included not only German researchers and professors, but also Austrian and Swiss ones as well. This experience allowed me to exchange ideas with other researchers who were also participating with their own posters and get valuable feedback from the kind people who stopped by my poster (including a couple of people who knew what my research topic was about). Indeed, in this conference I presented my work on androglobin, a globin with a chimeric structure preferentially expressed in the testis, and I was lucky to get in contact with people who happen to work in the globin field as well as increase awareness towards the most recently discovered member of the globin family and its importance in maintaining proper physiological balance.

Additionally, I was very lucky to engage in interesting conversations with some of the speakers participating in some of the sessions I attended during the conference, allowing me to obtain different meaningful points of view regarding my own research.

Finally, I would like to thank the LS<sup>2</sup> and the SCNAT for giving me the support required to take the opportunity to get to know the work of my German and Austrian peers, share my discoveries with the scientific community, and explore the city of Berlin.





## LS2 Travel Grant Report

Elisa Dietrich, PhD Candidate at University of Zurich

Email: [elisa.dietrich@uzh.ch](mailto:elisa.dietrich@uzh.ch)

European Society of Cardiology (ESC) Congress 2023; 25-28<sup>th</sup> August 2023, Amsterdam, Netherlands

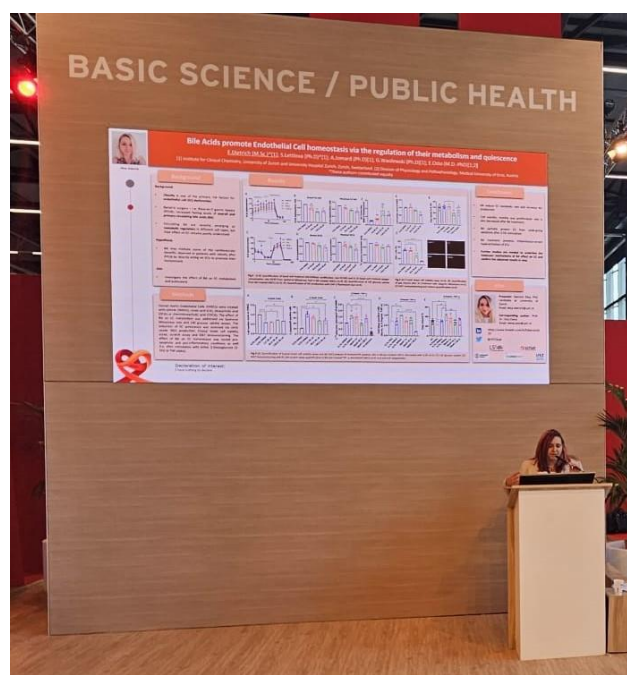
I would like to thank the Life Sciences Switzerland (LS2) and the Swiss Academy of Sciences (SCNAT) Travel Grant for giving me the opportunity to join my first International Congress!

The ESC Congress is one of the most prestigious annual meetings for clinicians and researchers in the cardiovascular field. This year the Congress took place in Amsterdam, Netherlands, from 25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> of August. Here, I had the opportunity to present my thesis project on the role of Bile Acids as novel regulators of Endothelial Cell homeostasis and quiescence, in the form of e-Poster. I was scared and excited to present my work in front of so many experts in my research field and I was pleased to answer their questions and taking their useful suggestions.

The Congress hosted 30.000 participants from all over the world, 4.500 faculty and presenters and many industry partners. I was impressed by how a huge event like this one could have been such well organised. All events and presentations were detailed listed in the ESC Congress 2023 app, where it was possible to create your personalized "attendance list" in order to not miss any presentation that would be interesting for your work.

I also had the possibility to get to know so many people from the Young Investigators community and to share with them new research ideas, which will open the path to future collaborations. Of course, we didn't miss out on the opportunity to explore Amsterdam together and take part in aperitifs and social dinners!

All in all, it was a wonderful experience and I look forward to attending the next conference! My advice to all the young investigators of LS2 Community is to step out of your comfort zone and never be afraid to share your ideas.



**Awardee:** Maria Pappa

**Supervisor:** Charisios D. Tsiairis

**Department:** Quantitative Biology, Friedrich Miescher Institute for Biomedical Research

**Conference title:** Centuri conference - Information networks in biological systems

**Sponsor:** Life Sciences Switzerland (LS2)

**Dates:** 16/10/2023 to 20/10/2023

The Centuri conference takes place once per two years in the Institut d'Études Scientifiques de Cargèse, Corsica island, France. The title of this year's conference was "Information networks in biological systems" and the scientific works presented had all in common the interest for the multidisciplinary and across fields collaboration. Most of the projects incorporated elements from physics, mathematics and biology. This is very exciting to me, as my master of science was called Cell Physics, and shared the same principle of being in the interface between physics, mathematics and biology. It was an amazing opportunity to learn how physicists or mathematicians can model biological processes and it gives someone the chance to establish future collaborations. This conference offers a place, where people working across many disciplines can sit together and shape multidisciplinary projects.

Personally, I had the chance to present the results of my PhD project, which has the title "Rac1 small GTPase regulates oscillation dynamics during mouse embryo segmentation" and belongs to the broad field of Developmental Biology and Quantitative Biology. The feedback during the presentation as well as afterwards was very valuable and constructive, as new ideas for experiments and analysis came to my mind or were proposed by other attendees. Some keynote speakers were also very interested in my work and engaged by asking a lot of questions.

My future research goals align very well with the topics covered in the Centuri conference, as I would like to bridge Mechanobiology with cancer research during my clinical residency and my postdoc. With this in mind, the conference offered me an amazing opportunity to connect with people in the Mechanobiology, Bioinformatics, Systems Biology and Bioengineering field. Some proposals for a future postdoc position appeared as well. Furthermore, we, the students, had the chance in one of the sessions to participate in round tables with PIs and ask them about their career paths, how they envision science in the future, what can be improved in the way science is practiced etc. Last but not least, the conference included an extraordinary social program, as we could enjoy the local gastronomy, an organised hiking trip to a wonderful mountain area, and also the Mediterranean sea. The scenery was very inspirational for thinking outside of the box in terms of science. Especially in the position where I am at the moment with the writing of my thesis, this conference offered me motivation, inspiration and a clearer mind to focus on my scientific work and re-imagine my career.



## **LS<sup>2</sup> Travel Grant Report** (Alfonso Gomez-Gonzalez, Greber lab, UZH, Zürich)

**Poster:** “*Bio-orthogonal Live Cell DNA visualization and Identification of Chromatin Reorganization during Adenovirus Infection through Alkene-Tetrazine Ligation*”

**Meeting:** “*The mobile genome: genetic and physiological impacts of transposable elements*”, EMBO workshop, 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> November 2023, EMBL, Heidelberg, Germany.

**Former meeting:** “*Cell Bio 2023*”, ASCB-EMBO meeting, 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

I am immensely grateful towards the LS<sup>2</sup> for their support and understanding towards my future career development. Although my travel grant was originally filed for the “*Cell Bio 2023*” ASCB meeting in Boston, the LS<sup>2</sup> kindly allowed me to change my application for the “*The mobile genome*” EMBO workshop in Heidelberg.

As a finishing PhD student aiming for a faculty position, finding a postdoctoral position which allows for me to develop the proper skillsets has become pivotal for my career. The U.S.A. became the ideal place for those things to occur and thus my interest in “*Cell Bio 2023*”. To ensure my attendance to this meeting, I not only applied for the LS<sup>2</sup> but also for EMBO funding. I was lucky enough to be awarded both travel grants. However, I was even luckier when the LS<sup>2</sup> allowed me to transfer my grant to another meeting that I was already planning to attend and proved to be key for my future development, “*The mobile genome*”.

The four-day “*The mobile genome*” EMBO workshop was packed with information, offering an in-depth look into the field of transposable elements, defined as mobile nucleic acid sequences within a genome, which was easy-to-follow even for the uninitiated in the field. The conference covered transposable elements’ evolution on the first day, regulation on the second, molecular mechanisms of transposition on the third and physiological impacts on the fourth and last day. I had the chance to present my work, in the form of a poster, on the second day of the conference. Although my line of work differed with the contents of the conference (as I worked at the time in elucidating mechanisms within adenovirus infection), not only people found use within the techniques that I used, inciting collaborations, but also I found inspiration for complementing experiments for my research.

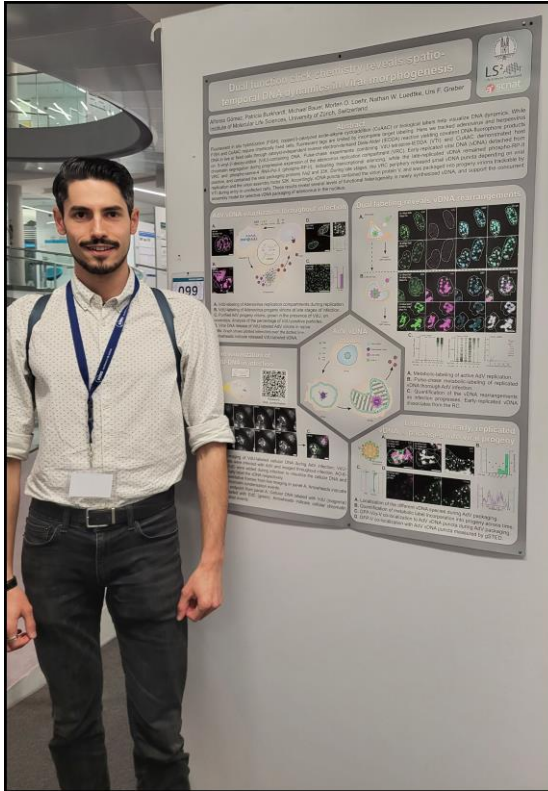
The greatest benefit from “*The mobile genome*” workshop came in the form of connections for my following postdoctoral applications. During the meeting, I had the chance to meet *Alejandro Burga* as well as members from the Zhang lab which allowed me to engage with *Sam Sternberg* at Columbia university. In addition, meeting *Rudolf Jaenisch* and *Yukiko Yamashita* at the same conference served as a gateway to reach *Richard Young* at MIT. Both *Sam Sternberg* and *Richard Young* I could further meet in person during the time I spent in Boston at the “*Cell Bio 2023*” ASCB meeting.

In comparison with “*The mobile genome*”, the five-day “*Cell Bio 2023*” ASCB meeting contained an overall lower scientific content level, as the latter was focused more on career development. With the high diversity of research presented, the large amount of parallel symposia and lack of outstanding keynote lectures it is hard to describe the scientific content of “*Cell Bio 2023*” on a day-to-day basis. Nevertheless, I had the chance to present my work in the form of a poster during the third day of the conference, and although I did not obtain as much feedback as in the first meeting, my research was of great help to associates from the Carolina Arias lab at the Chan Zuckerberg biohub.

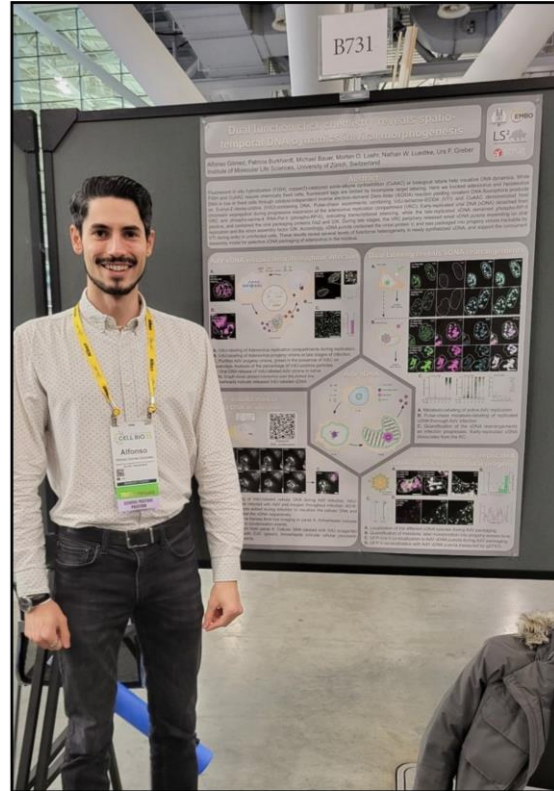
On the other hand, the career development events of the “*Cell Bio 2023*”, held mostly during the first and the second day of the conference, gave great feedback on future steps for academic careers. Notably, within these first two days, there were some artistic expressions of scientific concepts, from which I would like to highlight the inspiring work of Alex Ritter (@cell\_invitro in Instagram), who blows glass into beautiful cancer-killing T-cell sculptures that he uses to transmit these concepts to patients undergoing therapy. I would personally encourage those who read this report to check him out for inspiration in how to convey our science in a different way.

Although, the “*Cell Bio 2023*” held in Boston was less useful for me in a scientific level, it allowed me to close the deal on my Postdoc lab choice. Traveling to the U.S.A. permitted me to engage with the above-mentioned *Richard Young* and *Sam Sternberg* and later on with Erol Fikrig, who otherwise I would have been unable to meet. Overall giving me the confidence to make the right choice for my postdoctoral training.

It is hard to believe how small interactions, such as meeting someone at a conference, can have drastic effects in our professional development, in the same way as a butterfly flapping its wings can cause a hurricane thousands of miles away. It comes without saying that these interactions would not have been possible without the support of the LS<sup>2</sup>, who kindly offered me the possibility to attend a different meeting that later on changed my career. There are not enough words to express how grateful I am towards the LS<sup>2</sup> for their support at this stage of my life. I hope that many more aspiring scientists and researchers are able to profit from the same help and opportunities that I have received in the upcoming years.



Alfonso at "*The mobile genome*"



Alfonso at "*Cell Bio 2023*"

## CellBio2023 - Boston, USA - December 2-6, 2023

The joint meeting of the American Society for Cell Biology (ASCB) and European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO)

I am very thankful to the LS2 and the SCNAT for giving me the opportunity to attend CellBio23. This meeting was overall a real chance to learn and evolve both on the scientific and the personal level.

I signed up to this meeting toward the end of my PhD, primarily to get a chance to present my research in an international context. My last talk at a conference was back in February 2022, at the LS2 meeting, and a lot of new things had changed since then, including the publication of some of my work! In addition, I had in mind the idea to change field, and shift from my focus on the evolution of nervous system and behavior, to more molecular and cellular topics.

Despite my abstract ("Associative learning and monoamine signaling in the sea anemone *Nematostella vectensis*") not fitting exactly into the cell biology topics covered during the conference, I had the great surprise to be selected for a talk for the subgroup session "Invention of New Cell Types and Multicellular Assemblies". Very excited to get feedback and new ideas related to my work, I therefore prepared both a poster, presented on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup>, and a 12-minutes talk, presented on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> of December.

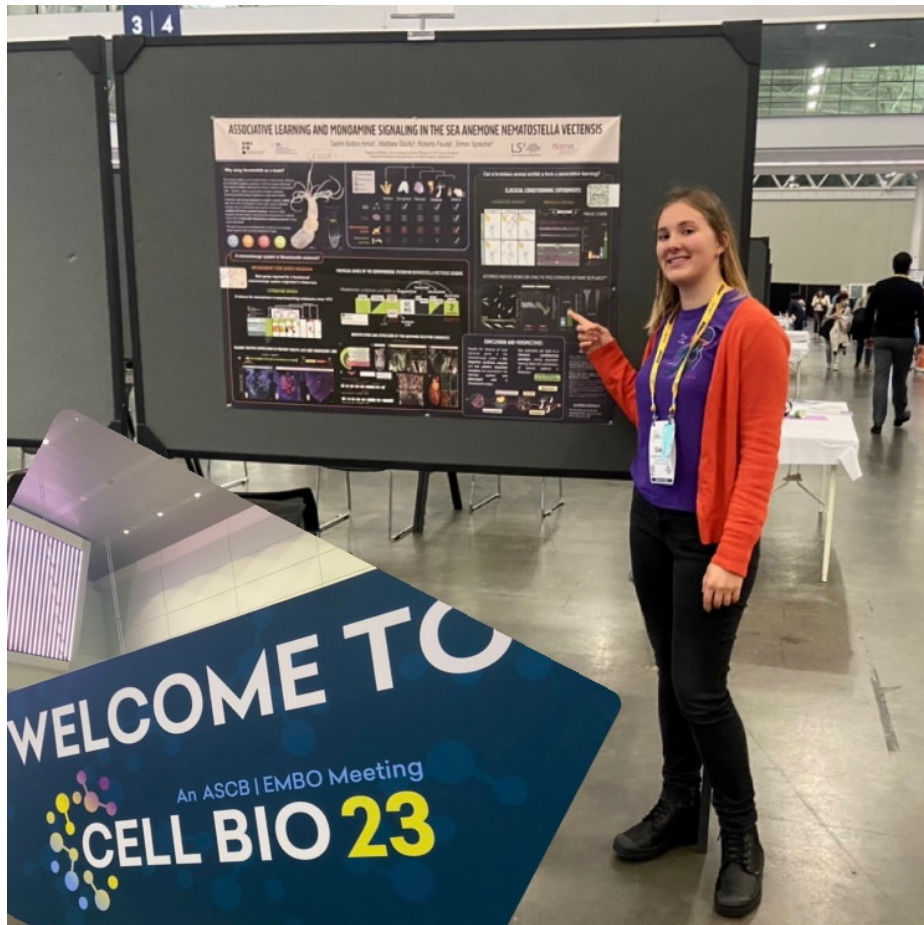
As the conference usually welcome more than 5'000 scientists from all over the world, on a very diverse range of topics, multiple sessions were always run in parallel (except for the keynote). Each attendee therefore had to plan on the app a path to navigate the meeting and attend the most relevant sessions every day, always with the fear to miss something out! On my part, I attended sessions related to my main interests: evolutionary cell biology, non-conventional model organisms, cell morphology and behavior, molecular basis of the nervous system function and development, etc... It was very inspiring to discover all the exciting research done all over the world. I spontaneously remember this fantastic microscope technology to follow planktonic cell behavior over great depth, the unexpected complex behavior of some species of ciliates, the efficient wound-healing of a jellyfish umbrella, the surprising mechanisms of holothurian ossicles development, or the ability of cancer cells to do associative learning!

On Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup>, I had the chance to engage into interesting discussions around my poster, and I then presented my research on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup>, in the subgroup session chaired by two established scientists in the field of the evolution of cell types: Jacob Musser and Bo Wang. This session included great talks on the coral-algal symbiosis and the bilaterian nervous system evolution, but I was disappointed to see that a leading expert in my field - who presented on this last topic - had to cancel his venue and sent instead a recorded talk.

It was a missed opportunity to discuss informally on the evolution of nervous systems, even though I still had interesting discussions and exchanges after my talk with other scientists.

Finally, this meeting was also the occasion to learn more about career options, and I attended several career sessions as well. As I am at a crossroad between industry and academia, I also had the chance to discuss with people with a similar background working in different jobs outside of academia. I had, in particular, very enriching conversations with a field application specialist from Leica who visited my poster, as well as with a senior account manager at Zeiss the following day. They both really opened my eyes to possible career paths and helped me understand their roles and what is expected when applying to such positions.

On a lighter note, it was also my first time visiting the USA, and I genuinely enjoyed staying in Boston. Such a big meeting is not ideal to engage and meet new people, as most come with their lab, and everyone is running around to all the sessions run in parallel, making it difficult to meet twice the same person by chance! I still managed to engage in informal talks with other students attending the same interests' subgroup, and I had the chance to spend some time with two other PhD students, with whom I could enjoy Boston on the evenings: one from McGill university in Canada that I met through the CellBioConnect meeting, and one from the Institut Curie in France with whom I connected thanks to a former lab mate in Fribourg.



Altogether, I can thus say that attending CellBio23 was a fantastic mix of inspiring science, personal career development, and fun with friends!

**Bottom Amiot Gaele**

**Lucilla Giammarino (University of Bern)**

**Biophysical Society 68<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting (BPS) - February 10-14, 2024**

PhD candidate at the Institute of Physiology

The LS2 Travel grant enabled me to participate in the Biophysical Society 68<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting (BPS), February 10-14, 2024. The conference was held in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania- USA), where internationally leading researchers and the next generation of early career scientists were brought together for the scientific discourse about new findings and innovations in the field.

The five days have been filled with an interesting and multifaceted conference program. The keynote speakers showed their latest exciting research, but also the more specialized sessions were of extraordinary scientific quality.

The BPS organization committee selected my submitted abstract for an oral presentation. Enthusiastic about this fortunate opportunity, I presented our findings on sex differences in cardiac electrophysiology and relative sex hormones effects using WT rabbits.

It was an amazing learning experience and I establish new connections for my current work, as well as my future career. In this settings I received very insightful feedback for future experiments, as well as considerations for my research. I am grateful that I was able to attend the conference in person, and I would like to thank the LS2 and SCAT that made it possible for me to attend.

