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Editorial

Pharmaceutical Science in a post-COVID-19 world: The 13th APS PharmSci International Conference

The 13th APS PharmSci International Conference was held in Belfast between the 7th and 9th September 2022 at the city's landmark Europa Hotel.

The event, the first face-to-face APS meeting since Greenwich in 2019, attracted 365 delegates of more than 20 nationalities. A key theme running through the conference was how innovation and teamwork in the pharmaceutical sciences, often across international boundaries, continues to drive recovery of patients, healthcare organisations, the economy and society to overcome the deleterious effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There were plenary lectures from internationally recognised experts in pharmaceutical science including from Professor Ryan Donnelly, the Science Chair of the conference, who gave an update on the translation of microneedles from basic science into clinical applications. Professor Claire Thompson delivered an inspirational talk on her journey associated with becoming the CEO of Agility Life Sciences and the many skills that this requires. Professor Helen McCarthy also gave a talk that combined her basic science research and journey into translation when talking about the use of stealth delivery of mRNA vaccines and being the CEO of pHion Therapeutics, this talk was a personal highlight for me and really triggered excitement in the field of pharmaceutical science. The final plenary lecture was delivered by Dr Mark McAllister who highlighted the importance of collaborative research in advancing science, again this was a fascinating talk that really hit home on the value of networking, specifically whilst being at a face-to-face meeting. Professor Snow Stolnik spoke about nanomedicines and biological barriers and continued the theme of the value of collaborative research in achieving the best outcomes for pharmaceutical science.

In addition to the plenary lectures there were three APS award lectures, these award lectures represent different facets of pharmaceutical science. Professor Stuart Jones gave the APS award lecture which recognises sustained excellence in pharmaceutical science, my own take home message from his talk was the need for the APS to work more closely with other professional bodies to better integrate pharmaceutical development. The APS award for innovative science was given to Professor Vitaliy Khutoryanskiy who presented a great insight into the latest developments in transmucosal delivery and even included tips for slug collection. The final award was presented to Dr Bahijja Raimi-Abraham as the emerging scientist; Bahijja spoke about her research journey and shared some personal insights as well as the scientific outputs that she has achieved to date.

In addition to the plenary and award lectures the conference had three parallel scientific streams that were hosted by the APS focus groups and covered topics from biopharmaceutics, process engineering, skin, materials science, advanced therapy medicinal products (ATMPs), nanomedicines, drugs from natural sources, 3D printed pharmaceuticals so there really was something for everyone. We were delighted to continue to partner with the United Kingdom and Ireland Controlled Release Society (UKICRS) and the Joint Pharmaceutical Analysis Group (JPAG) for sessions within the 13th APS PharmSci conference programme.

A personal highlight for me was attending the sessions where the talks were selected from submitted abstracts which provided opportunities for PhD researchers to present their work. It is often within these sessions, as well as the poster presentations where you learn about the very latest developments in the pharmaceutical sciences.

The conference attracted over 200 posters providing further opportunities to network with the next generation of researchers. There were prizes for the best posters, but I know that the judges had a tough time making their selection as there were so many excellent posters on display. There were four poster prizes in total, two were the judges choice and two were awarded as the peoples choice and were voted for by those attending the conference. The judges choice poster awards went to Rania Mohammad Mahafdeh for her poster, "Eradication of E. coli and S. aureus by Ciprofloxacin-loaded hydrogel" and Zoe McKinnon for her poster on, "Solubility measurement of poorly soluble drugs in fasted state simulated intestinal fluid". The people's choice posters were awarded to Ayse Kaya for her poster, "Solubility Enhancement for Diethyldithiocarbamate-Zinc for Lung Cancer Treatment" and to Anastasia Ripolin for her poster, "An assessment of the potential use of a 1cm² hydrogel-forming microneedle patch, in the weekly treatment of osteoporosis".

I certainly enjoyed the conference and learnt a lot during the presentations as well as at the poster sessions. It was great to have so many people together to celebrate pharmaceutical science and recognise its value in the UK and beyond.

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