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AWARDEE REPORT FORM

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| NAME | | Dr Claire Conway | | |
| TWITTER HANDLE\* *optional* | | @claireconwayphd | | |
| UNIVERSITY | | RCSI | | |
| NAME OF AWARD | | Departmental Seminar Series | | |
| PURPOSE OF AWARD *conference/event attended/organised (full name) with city and dates.* | | | | |
| To cover accommodation and subsistence of invited speaker, Prof Saranna Fanning in Dublin 24 April to 25 April for her seminar in RCSI on 25 April 2025. | | | | |
| REPORT: What were your anticipated benefits?  *Minimum number of words between 200-400. Please write in coherent paragraphs.* | | | | |
| The benefit of inviting Prof Saranna Fanning to speak at the RCSI Lunchtime Seminar Series was to engage a variety of principal investigators, postdoctoral fellows and postgraduate students across the university. The ultimate anticipated benefit of this invited seminar was to initiate introductions to Prof Fanning and her group’s research with principal investigators at RCSI with a view to fostering and growing potential research activity. More broadly, we anticipated that the seminar would have the benefit of bringing together researchers in neuroscience, in particular facilitating cross-disciplinary networking between biologists, anatomists, and engineers, thus stimulating new collaborations and research ideas.    Prof Fanning is highly knowledgeable of the critical need to develop disease-modifying treatments for Parkinson’s disease. For many years, Parkinson’s disease has been approached as a problem of abnormal protein. The Fanning lab approaches the disease as a problem of both abnormal protein and abnormal lipids. Her team focuses on the impact of fat balance in Parkinson’s disease. Using cell models of disease, the lab analyzed saturated and unsaturated fatty acids, identifying a candidate therapeutic target to re-balances unsaturated fat. This target has now entered human clinical trials. Moderately altering fatty acid pathways is a promising therapeutic strategy for Parkinson’s disease. | | | | |
| COMMENTS: Describe your experience at the conference / lab visit / course / seminar/ event.  *Minimum number of words between 200-400. Please write in coherent paragraphs.* | | | | |
| Saranna Fanning is an Assistant Professor in Neurology at Harvard Medical School and Brigham & Women’s  Hospital. She received her undergraduate BSc and PhD degrees in Microbiology from University College Cork, Ireland (UCC), performing her doctoral research at UCC, Columbia University, NY, and Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh.  Prof. Fanning’s research seminar focused on understanding complex genetic interactions impacting disease and identifying therapeutic targets for Parkinson’s disease, Lewy Body Dementia and other synucleinopathies. Her group is focused on how the metabolome, currently the lipidome, is altered in disease, and identifying therapeutic targets in these pathways, one of which is currently in clinical trials. For decades, Parkinson’s disease and other α-synucleinopathies have been thought of as proteinopathies. In this seminar, a proteinopathy+lipidopathy paradigm will be presented as an approach to using aberrant lipid metabolism in Parkinson’s disease, to identify candidate therapeutic targets.  Overall, the seminar was well received, the audience was engaged from the onset with Prof Fanning posing her audience a question at the onset of her talk. The audience was a mix of principal investigators, postdoctoral fellows and postgraduate students. After the seminar the question and answer section was busy and a line of people queued for follow-up post end of the session. Several individual meetings with different principal investigators were facilitated on the day also. | | | | |
| REPORT: In relation to skills, what were the most important things you gained? *(does not apply to equipment grant.* For public engagement/outreach awards what did your audience gain and how did you evaluate success?  *Minimum number of words between 200-400. Please write in coherent paragraphs.* | | | | |
| For decades, Parkinson’s disease and other α-synucleinopathies have been thought of as proteinopathies. In this seminar, a proteinopathy+lipidopathy paradigm was presented as an approach to using aberrant lipid metabolism in Parkinson’s disease to identify candidate therapeutic targets and new therapeutic strategies. This paradigm is premised on an important disease protein:lipid interplay and has resulted in a lipid-related candidate therapeutic entering human clinical trials.  The audience gained two major benefits from the seminar. Firstly, there was the direct transmission of knowledge and novel research findings imparted by the seminar itself. From discussions during and after the seminar, the general opinion amongst attendees was that the seminar was of a high standard overall, and that the breadth of topics and taxa covered made for a very interesting and engaging talk that broadened perspectives.  Secondly, the seminar also facilitated networking opportunities between researchers, including across disciplines: our delegates included researchers working in the fields of anatomy, biology, physiology, medical physics and tissue engineering. In the planning of the event, we were keen to facilitate attendees to meet and talk to one another, and to provide lunch so that attendees would remain together. This strategy worked well and post-seminar informal feedback has indicated that attendees very much appreciated the opportunity to meet and interact with their peers and forge new connections. | | | | |
| REPORT: How do you think you will put this learning experience into practice in the future? For public engagement/outreach awards how with the materials/knowledge generated by this activity be used in the future?  *Minimum number of words between 200-400. Please write in coherent paragraphs.* | | | | |
| In Prof Fanning’s seminar at RCSI, the role of the metabolome in neurodegenerative disease was presented and discussed with particular relevance to Parkinson’s disease. It is my genuine wish that this seminar is the initial seed of collaborative research exchange between RCSI and Harvard Medical School. The funds received from the Anatomical Society in support of this seminar were vital to planting this first seed of exchange. It is my hope that this fledgling seed will be grown by facilitated networking opportunities between researchers, across disciplines: our seminar attendees included researchers working in the fields of anatomy, biology, physiology, medical physics and tissue engineering.  Furthermore, the knowledge exchange aspect in the learnings of Prof Fanning’s group’s work in the area of Parkinson’s disease could lead to cross-collaboration potential with Future Neuro – which is based out of RCSI as the Research Ireland Centre for Translational Brain Science. Their mission revolves around conducting research that is shaped by both patients and clinicians, leading to groundbreaking diagnostics, treatments, and innovative digital healthcare solutions for people affected by neurological and neuropsychiatric conditions – including Parkinson’s disease. This exciting seminar laid the groundwork for transatlantic research exchange, discussion on new collaboration potential in the area of Parkinson’s disease. | | | | |
| Data Protection/GDPR: I consent to the data included in this submission being collected, processed and stored by the Anatomical Society. Answer YES or NO in the Box below | | | | |
| YES | | | | |
| Graphical Images: If you include graphical images you must obtain consent from people appearing in any photos and confirm that you have consent. A consent statement from you must accompany each report if relevant. A short narrative should accompany the image. Answer N/A not applicable, YES or NO in the box below | | | | |
| N/A | | | | |
| Copyright: If you submit images you must either own the copyright to the image or have gained the explicit permission of the copyright holder for the image to be submitted as part of the report for upload to the Society’s website, Newsletter, social media and so forth. A copyright statement must accompany each report if relevant. Answer N/A not applicable, YES or NO in the box below | | | | |
| N/A | | | | |
| SIGNATURE | Claire Conway | | DATE | 04-JUN-2025 |

*If submitted electronically, a type-written name is acceptable in place of a hand-written signature*

*File: AS-Award-Report-Form-171023 – International Conference*