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AWARDEE REPORT FORM

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| NAME | | Dr Marise Heyns | | |
| TWITTER HANDLE\* *optional* | |  | | |
| UNIVERSITY | | Ulster University | | |
| NAME OF AWARD | | Symington Bequest Fund Award 2023/24-Round 5 | | |
| PURPOSE OF AWARD *conference/event attended/organised (full name) with city and dates.* | | | | |
| To attend the AFSA2024 - African Forensic Science Academy inaugural conference, 23-28 September 2024 in Kigali, Rwanda | | | | |
| REPORT: What were your anticipated benefits?  *Minimum number of words between 200-400. Please write in coherent paragraphs.* | | | | |
| I intended to attend the conference to support the expansion of Forensic Science learned association across Africa. I was one of the founding members for the South African Academy for Forensic Sciences and this would be a natural expansion thereof. I also intended to meet the 12 invited keynote speakers, who including present and past presidents of International Association of Forensic Sciences (IAFS), Australian and New Zealand Forensic Science Society (ANZFSS), American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS), as well as the African Society of Forensic Medicine (ASFM) . This would allow me to build a network of like-minded practitioners utilising and promoting Anatomy in their practices. I also wanted to re-enforce the role of Anatomy as well as Ultrasound in Forensic Sciences, and build links across nations.  One of the most important benefits would be to engage with current practitioners in Africa, who may be interested in collaborative activities, to range from research to teaching as well as community outreach activities. It would be explorative to measure what is happening currently and how can it be linked to Anatomical Society objectives, as well as my own strategic objectives. An added bonus would be to visit the University of Rwanda and discuss possible collaboration in terms of using Ultrasound in medical education. | | | | |
| COMMENTS: Describe your experience at the conference / lab visit / course / seminar/ event.  *Minimum number of words between 200-400. Please write in coherent paragraphs.* | | | | |
| Prior to the conference, I was approached by the president of the then Interim Executive to provide support for the administration and logistics of the conference, resulting in many late nights finalising the conference booklet. I also served on the Scientific committee, with much work to do formatting abstracts to a large non academic cohort. I was also asked to run 2 workshops, entitled “Young Professionals in FS” and “Education and Training: Key priorities in Africa” . These were well attended and brough neighbouring nations together. I have now summarised the burning issues for both workshops. I also delivered 2 presentations: “The Use of Ultrasound in Post Mortem Investigations” and “Anatomy: The Heart of Forensic Education and Practise”. These were very well received, and I can report from the interest generated, that most of the delegates agree that Anatomy has its rightful place in Forensic Science as a whole, and not only in Forensic Medicine. Based on the content of the Anatomy presentations, which displayed the variety of anatomy projects undertaken at my previous institution, UCT, I was invited to serve on the Scientific committee for the next IAFS in Bulgaria in 2026.  In view of my extensive involvement and contributions to the conference, I was invited to the President’s dinner, meeting the Minister of Justice and other government officials. At the AGM, I was also selected onto the first official council of AFSA.  I also visited the University of Rwanda Medical school, and have agreed on some collaborative work.  The country practices Umuganda, which used to mean that members of the community would call on family, friends and neighbours to help complete a difficult task. Modern day Umuganda can be described as community work. On the last Saturday of each month, communities come together to do a variety of public works, which often include activities that promote infrastructure development and environmental protection. Rwandans between 18 and 65 are obliged to participate in these activities, and non-Rwandans living in Rwanda are encouraged to take part. The conference organisers arranged for all delegates to help with the planting of 100 trees in a local eco-park, which fitted well with the theme of the conference: Forensic Science Ecosystem in Africa | | | | |
| 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.* | | | | |
| During the conference week, I had several remarkable opportunities that made the trip even more memorable and productive. Throughout the conference, I had the opportunity to exchange ideas with leaders in the field of forensic science, including current and former presidents of the International Association of Forensic Sciences (e.g., Professor Yanko Kolev, Professor Hee-Sun Chung, and Professor Claude Roux), the President and Vice-President of AFSA (Dr. Olckers and Professor Mehdi Ben Khelil), and other esteemed members of the forensic science community. On Wednesday evening, at a dinner hosted by Drs. Olckers and Karangwa, I was able to have substantive conversations with other keynote speakers and with the Minister of Justice/Attorney General, Emmanuel Ugirashebuja, about a variety of forensic science topics, including the status of the training and educational opportunities for young scientists. I now have personal links with these esteemed colleagues and have received invitations to collaborate. Prof Yankov was particularly interested in Ultrasound and Anatomy teaching and has invited me to the scientific committee of IAFS2026 on Bulgaria. As one of the organisers of the AFSA2024 conference, albeit a late joiner, I needed to apply additional presentation skills, by adjusting my allocated time for presentation to accommodate VIP protocols. I received an intense and comprehensive exposure to the requirements of an international conference, with required protocols and high level government interactions. I was also exposed to international collaborators and learnt to adjust my pace for management or cooperative decision making. | | | | |
| 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.* | | | | |
| I hope to make the skills available to Anatomical Society if and when required. I feel better prepared to offer assistance in arranging an event or conference for Anatomical Society and believe I now have the experience to support an offer to host one of the Anatomical Society meetings at Ulster University in Derry/Londonderry. I believe the practice of Umuganda can be beneficial for any conference organiser, as it was a truly rewarding experience to not only contribute but also to participate in this monthly community service day, in which all citizen participate in public service. I feel this should be incorporated in all organised events, in some measure.  The high level engagement allowed me to build links, and I intend to forge agreements with some of the stakeholders in terms of Anatomy in postgraduate training. I particularly intend to collate more information on Ultrasound and Anatomy training, as well as Anatomy and forensic medicine / pathology training, where there is scope for training courses and workshops, especially incorporating teaching technologies.  The topics of the workshops and 1 of my presentations can be applied in almost any discipline, and I hope to offer it at upcoming conference/s. The ultrasound presentation was accompanied by strongly promoting Anatomical society, and several delegates exchanged contact details in order to engage further. | | | | |
| 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 | Dr Marise Heyns | | DATE | 08.10.2024 |

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

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