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 AWARDEE REPORT FORM

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| NAME | Kieran McDermott |
| TWITTER HANDLE\* *optional* |  |
| UNIVERSITY | University of Limerick |
| NAME OF AWARD | Symington bequest |
| PURPOSE OF AWARD *conference/event attended/organised (full name) with city and dates.* |
| Attendance and presenting at the 21st Congress of the International Federation of Associations of Anatomists (IFAA), Korea - September 2024. |
| REPORT: What were your anticipated benefits?*Minimum number of words between 200-400. Please write in coherent paragraphs.* |
| It was indeed a great privilege to be in a position to attend the IFAA conference in Gwangju South Korea. The IFAA Conference is usually held every 3-4 years so it is also a rare opportunity. A four day conference with over 1000 attendees from the four corners of the globe promised a lot and, fortunately, in this instance the 21st Congress of the IFAA delivered. I had anticipated lively and stimulating presentations and discussion on current and emerging trends in the broad areas of anatomy\ morphology research and research into education and how anatomy teaching should look in the future as technology continues to advance at an enormous pace. I was not disappointed. From the plenary speakers to the posters session there was great diversity of thought, ideas and innovation on a huge array of anatomical research topics and in education. I had hoped to be refreshed and reinvigorated in my own approaches by what I would hear and experience at the conference. Having attended, and engaged thoroughly and enthusiastically with all on offer, I am certain that I will be. Presenting some recent work on the development of the extrinsic and intrinsic innervation of the mesentery and GIT was also rewarding and, although the poster session could have been better showcased, feedback was interesting and useful. |
| COMMENTS: Describe your experience at the conference / lab visit / course / seminar/ event.*Minimum number of words between 200-400. Please write in coherent paragraphs.* |
| First and foremost, this was an extremely well organised and managed conference which the Korean Association of Anatomists can be very proud of. The programme was extensive with many parallel symposia each day, almost too many, as it was often difficult to choose which to attend due to there being so many varied and interesting topics under discussion in the sessions, covering almost every imaginable anatomical topic. Symposia on ‘Exploring Brain body dynamics in neurological disorders’ clashed with ‘Anatomical Education Human Morphological Study based on Digital and Intelligence Technology’ – how to choose! From a technical AV standpoint, often an issue at many conferences I have attended, the Gwangju IFAA will stand apart as an exemplar of how should be done. Sessions mostly ran on time, presentations always worked and were visible on the screen and videos ran seamlessly, all making for a wonderful experience for the attendee who is usually rushing from pillar to post to try to catch as many talks as possible. Usually there was also ample time for discussion, and engagement from attendees was excellent in this regard. All these small things are important and especially so when a participant, like me, had travelled a great distance, taking up lots of time and money, to attend. Other aspects of the organisation also led to an enhanced experience. The layout of the exhibition hall, trade stalls and coffee\lunch area created a space in which chat, debate and negotiation could be comfortably accommodated and, most importantly, fostering collaborating, a recurrent theme in many of the education focussed symposia. Finally, the overall experience was greatly enhanced by the exposure to some wonderful aspects of Korean culture and hospitality, from the spectacular exposition of traditional Korean dance at the opening ceremony to the food on offer at the various conference events. |
| 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.* |
| One could not come away from a conference of this breadth of interest without acquiring new insights into how you practise your profession and this of course translates into an overall improved skillset. As an anatomist/scientist with a broad remit in both research and teaching, I believe I gained considerably from hearing about and experiencing hands on, in the trade exhibition, the incredibly rapid advances being made in digital anatomy, virtual dissection and the various forms of extended reality. Furthermore, AI will be an additional and extremely powerful tool in the education setting in the near term. Appreciating the full benefits of these innovative approaches to teaching and learning can be challenging, and opinion and informed research is often conflicted and contradictory. Through listening to the considered views on these issues from experts and long-standing practitioners such as plenary speakers Claudia Krebs and Wojciech Pawlina and also from many of the symposia and poster presenters, I certainly feel I now have enhanced skills in this domain and feel I will be able to develop my practice in a more informed manner. This is especially important for me as the School in which I lead anatomy teaching is one of the growing number in which actual cadaveric dissection is not employed for teaching anatomy. A major take home message for me from the conference overall, is that the pros and cons of digital versus actual dissection will continue to engender great debate amongst the anatomy communities worldwide but a clearer picture is certainly starting to emerge.  |
| 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.* |
| At the IFAA in Gwangju, l learnt much in relation to specific areas of anatomy research relevant to my own special interest in developmental neuroscience that I will bring to bear on the future direction of my specific research goals. However, I also gained valuable knowledge and insight into innovative anatomy curricular design and delivery and into different modalities of assessment. It is always worthwhile to hear the experiences of others as they introduce innovations into their curricula and, also, to share your own experiences. Many of us are reinventing the wheel in this regard, and collaboration and exchange of ideas is key to greater efficiencies, thus freeing up time for other interesting challenges in our fields. Innovations around greater inclusivity and diversity with respect to anatomy illustrations, models etc and public facing outreach activities are good examples or how I will attempt to guide our curricular development and community engagement, based on examples given by contributors at the Conference. Whilst we currently have a very successful near-peer teaching programme, I also gleaned, from presentations and discussion and the Conference, of ways to improve this further, particularly in the area of student reward and accreditation. Finally in a very practical sense, the Conference, especially the trade demonstration, provided me with some crucial insight into new product availability which I will use immediately as the School at the University of Limerick is embarking on a significant expansion in term of physical resources, to include a much enhanced and technologically innovative anatomy teaching and learning centre.  |
| 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 | Kieran McDermott | DATE | 1/10/24 |

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

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

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