

Early Stage Professionals: looking forward (and a quick glance backwards)

Dear ISCT community:

Three years ago, through the efforts of **Debe Griffin** and **Emily Culme-Seymour**, we formed the Early Stage Professionals (ESP) Committee with the mission of increasing membership within ISCT by supporting the development of ESPs and developing the cellular therapy leaders of tomorrow. When the committee was established, we organized the committee such that there were two co-chairs: one with a 2-year term and one with a three year term. In doing so, there would always be a co-chair with experience leading the committee. Emily rotated off as co-chair last year, replaced by **Fernanda Masri**, PhD (Sartorius-Stedim Biotech, UK). Now it is my turn to rotate off the committee leaving the ESPs in the capable hands of Fernanda and **George Hucks**, MD (University of North Carolina Hospitals) a returning member of the committee.

Over the past three years it's been a privilege to see how rapidly the ESP committee has grown. Three years ago no one knew who we were, often calling us the "young investigators" or "ESPNS". Now the buzz word "ESP" resonates throughout the conference halls as a key initiative within ISCT and the term is synonymous with energy, enthusiasm, and execution. Our committee now consists of 20 members, with subcommittees devoting attention to the 3 critical goals of the committee: 1) Developing a Mentorship Program, 2) Creating ESP awareness, recruitment, and retention (Telegraft, AMA webinars, white papers, networking events), and 3) Developing a comprehensive training plan to engage future scientists early and educate them about the potential rewards associated with a job in the cellular therapy field. These initiatives will each support increased ISCT membership and serve to increase the participation of ESPs serving on ISCT's scientific committees. As the annual meeting progressed in Montreal, I was approached by a handful of ESPs individually, each asking how they could play a part in the ESP community. This is the type of attention and enthusiasm we need to continue to promote and capture.

With a solid foundation of active, enthusiastic ESPs, a number of new ambitious initiatives, and more ESPs serving on ISCT's scientific committees than ever before, I am confident that the committee is in exceedingly capable hands with Fernanda and George. The future is bright for ISCT ESPs and it is my sincere hope that within the next 10 years we will have elected our first former ESP committee member as president of ISCT.

Sincerely,

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