Post-Conference Wrap Up: ISCT ANZ Regional Scientific Meeting

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The 2019 ANZ ISCT Regional Scientific Meeting was held on the 13th - 15th November in partnership with two other Australian societies; The Australasian Society for Stem Cell Research (ASSCR), and The Australasian Gene and Cell Therapy Society (AGCTS). The conference was held at the Brisbane Convention Centre in Queensland, Australia. Delegates attended from across Australia, New Zealand, and Asia. In addition, the international speakers were flown in from the U.S.A (Prof Amander Clark – UCLA, A/Prof Charles A Gersbach – Duke, Dr Xuiyan Wan – MSKCC).

The inter-society collaboration brought together leaders in the field of cell and gene therapy to discuss the latest advancements in basic science, pre-clinical research, and clinical trials. Particular focus fell on stem cell disease modelling, inducible pluripotent stem cells, manufacturing CAR T-cells for liquid and solid tumours, and other applications for gene modified cells in various diseases. In addition to clinical and scientific presentations, there was a
regulatory panel discussion organised by ISCT ANZ. The panel consisted of representatives from the federal regulator of blood, tissues, and cell therapy (Therapeutic Goods Administration, TCA), the federal regulator of gene modified organisms and cells (Office of the Gene Technology Regulator), and an institutional biosafety committee (our very own A/Prof Ngaire Elwood). The panel session was guided by Dominic Wall (ANZ ISCT Regulatory Affairs Committee) who presented relevant hypothetical scenarios that stoked robust and thought provoking discussion.

The ISCT ANZ and global committees were well represented with presentations by Prof John Rasko (2018-2020 ISCT President) and Prof Rajiv Khanna (2020-2022 ISCT ANZ Regional Vice-President elect). The winner of the ISCT Travel Award for the best abstract submitted by a student or Early Stage Professional (ESP) was Dr Wei Jiang (RPA Hospital) who presented on “rapid administration of third-party cytomegalovirus (CMV), Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) or adenovirus (Adv) specific T-cells (VSTs) post-haemopoietic stem cell transplant (HSCT)”.

The conference brought together clinicians, researchers, technologists, quality management, industry, and government for a fascinating day of talks on cellular and gene therapy. This was a great opportunity for us to network and understand how clinical advances will be introduced by the Australian health and medical system.

*photo courtesy of ASN Events*