

**ISBER Travel Award 2013**  
**Talishiea Croxton**  
**Institute of Human Virology Nigeria**

The Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN)- Human Heredity, and Health in Africa Biorepository (I-HAB) and I are grateful for the opportunity I was granted to attend the ISBER Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida from May 20-24, 2014. I-HAB is a young biorepository located in Abuja, Nigeria; without the travel award, it would have been impossible for me to attend the meeting. My attendance was timely as I-HAB was awarded NIH Human Heredity and Health in Africa (H3A) funding to upgrade its operations to international ISBER standards to store and distribute high quality biological specimens in support of African investigators involved in genomic research in Africa.

As Manager of I-HAB, I looked forward to the ISBER Conference with great expect actions for learning, networking, and a little fun. I was inspired by the meeting's theme "Evidence-Based Biobanking: Fact Not Fantasy" as IHVN is an institution, interested in symbiotic relationship between clinical, research and biobanking activities to foster diversity and sustainability. I attended pre-conference and conference workshops, poster presentations, and vendor exhibits to maximize my experience and to empower me to effect overall operations, infrastructure, policies, and protocols at I-HAB.

The pre-conference workshops I attended were: 3a) "Issues to consider in designing a repository" and "The nuts and bolts of operating a repository", 3b) "Essential concepts for effective specimen receipt", and 3C) "Creating successful training programs for repository staff". The presentations were provided by facilitators who demonstrated expertise and a passion to teach and learn from others. In their session on designing and operating a repository, Katherine Sexton and William Grizzle Kathy, introduced the idea of -80C storage being better than liquid nitrogen storage and provided evidence supporting this notion. In Nigeria, where access to liquid nitrogen is extremely limited and expensive, that information was very useful to me. Overall, the pre-conference workshops introduced new ideas in general organization, infrastructure and staffing that I could adapt in Nigeria.

During the conference, I attended many insightful sessions. The "Financial Sustainability of Biobanks" session was particularly useful to me as we are in the process of defining a business model for I-HAB. The presenters and representative biobanks were diverse and included disease based biobanks, biobanks receiving specimen solely from patients, international biobanking systems and others with a range of financial structures. Moreover, the Canadian Tumor Repository Network shared their website which contains useful resources for biobanks including a Biobanking Costing Model, strategies for biobank certification and over 40 SOPs. Notable discussion points and the online resources will be extremely helpful to me as we review our Business Model at I-HAB. Katheryn Shea's presentation on "Future Use Considerations for Global Collections of Human Biospecimens: Annotation to Ensure Compliance in an Evolving Global Regulatory Environment" highlighted the importance of harmonization and awareness of restrictions that govern data and specimen exchange. This has since been realized in my experience in global partnerships and collaborations.

There was a host of networking activities to promote interaction and build relationships including Interactive Discussions and social activities. I participated in an Interactive Discussion on Low and Middle Income Countries (LMIC) facilitated by Maimuna Mendy. We discussed ethical and regulatory challenges and advances in Africa, including the importance of nontraditional stakeholders such as elders and chiefs. Furthermore, there were plans to create a network for African biobanks to learn from one another's experiences. For someone who spent decades of her life collecting Mickey Mouse memorabilia, there was no better way to top of my rewarding experience than meeting Mickey Mouse! Social events which included a meet and greet for new members, a 5k walk/run fundraiser in support of future travel awards, the IllumiNations fireworks and light show at Epcot Center and scheduled group

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trip to Downtown Disney. Well done to everyone who contributed to the success and overall experience of the 2014 ISBER conference.