

## ISBER 2014 TRAVEL AWARDEE MEETING REPORT

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By

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***‘Fact not Fantasy: Evidence-Based Biobanking’*** was the theme of this meeting which was extremely organised with an excellent scientific program on the evidence-based biobanking from collection to use. We had great discussions and presentations on a range of issues related to the establishment and operation of varieties of bio repositories including human, animal, seed, museum and environmental collections, with regard to sample integrity, availability and reliability of results. My interest was in the human specimen bio repositories since it is my speciality. The ISBER working groups were really organised with highest specialisation which made their respective sessions very encouraging.

Some of the Interesting Symposia were: Advancing Science through Evidence-based Biobanking.” In the Keynote presentation on “Integration of Biobanks into Clinical Health Care through Linkage to Medical Records—the eMER GE experience.” Focused on how bio bank discoveries are supported largely by high quality samples linked to their respective phenotypic data. Then “Cell Processing and Preservation for Biobanking: New Horizons” (Dr. Erik Woods) session set the theme of our meeting. This gave me a better understanding of biospecimen science.

Symposium 2 was on “Translational Science through Biobanking: Applications and Opportunities” With Talks and interactive discussions. Symposium 3A, “Financial Sustainability of Biobanks” looked at Cost Recovery & Financial Planning for Biobanks, In-depth analysis of whether bio repositories are meeting the needs of their “customers” or are rather “just collecting and storing”, are the collections stored made use of?, with different points of view from experts who have managed bio banks for over 10yrs from different countries from whom I bought a leaf. Peter Watsons’ presentation using the Canadian bio bank was an excellent explanation.

“Biospecimen Identifiability, Privacy and Broad Data Sharing” was a special Topic Sessions: “*Getting to Know ISBER*” breakfast session for any new or potential members. This was a valuable chance as i met and interacted with several ISBER members of the education and training committee as well as the bioinformatics committee.

“Implementing Robust Quality Management Systems for Repositories”, “Biospecimen Science: Learning from Cryobiology to Improve Preservation Outcome”, “Keep Your Samples Safe: Choose the Appropriate Storage presented the justification for storage containers. What Bio repositories and Investigators Need to Know”, and “Issues to Consider in Designing a Repository / The Nuts and Bolts of Operating a Repository”. Essential concepts for Effective Specimen Receipt” and “Creating Successful Training Programs for Repository Staff” were discussed and placed me in a better position to handle repository student interns.

Workshop sessions on “Come Hell or High Water: Disaster preparedness for biospecimen collections” by Nigel Brockton, gave me a lot of insight in the contingency planning for bio repositories which I ought to get involved in for our biorepository.

During the workshop I also had the opportunity to learn about some technical aspects on the cryopreservation of samples from Taylor Wharton. Proper handling of samples and quality control was also a major theme in the presentation of the posters. “Innovative Technologies”

session focused on the science and validation behind new products and technologies that have the potential to impact biorepository operations and specimen management/ workflow. I also learnt about a variety of laboratory sample management software offered by vendors as was exhibited in the hall. Great software developments and latest technology in laboratory automation were exhibited in support of biorepository activities. There were also posters of great quality on a wide variety of biobanking topics.

MRC is currently transiting all its sample data to Freezer works sample storage and management database. I was happy to meet and relate with Rick Michels, the freezer works president and all the queries I had got answered.

In Uganda we have stringent legal and ethical standards surrounding the management of clinical samples; however, there are no specific laws and policies in the management of bio banks and their collections which area I am now looking at. The final session looked at the important biobanking developments in Europe. BBMRI-ERIC, a new governance tool for bio banking, The Finnish law on bio banks and the EU general Data protection regulation proposal were among the topics that enlightened my understanding on the ethical and legal considerations for biobanking and biorepository operations.

The exposure I got at the ISBER meeting resolved several specific questions I had on the management of Biobanks and how the scientific community looks at biobanking as a profession but mostly, it generated new ideas and prospects about the wide opportunity of Bio banks and the work that we can do at MRC. This meeting gave me the plat form for career development in this field. I believe the contacts and connections I made with Dr Fay Betsou, Daniel Simeon-Dubach and Elaine Gunter among others will help me develop and advance my career in the biobanking field as I also hope that I, together with MRC will collaborate with them in later times.

I hope to have full society membership as an individual in January 2015, and as well present the idea to MRC as an organisation so that we are able to benefit from Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) for biorepository, Online journal of Bio preservation and biobanking, society leadership, Proficiency testing, forum for biobanking experts among the society benefits at organisational level. I plan to join the education and training committee which I hope will help push the mission of ISBER in Africa's emerging countries in the biobanking field. I have already started integrating the science and management of bio banks into our biorepository work and will train Interns at our laboratory with the knowledge I attained.

On behalf of MRC/UVRI, I want to express my appreciation to the ISBER Global expansion Fund which contributed to my travel award through the 5k run/walk and the ISBER Education and training committee, You gave me a golden opportunity which never left me the same.

Finally, Special thanks go to Dr Fay Betsou the immediate past president of ISBER and Orsa Papaioannou, the project manager who coordinated and made available all that i needed to attend the meeting as the travel award winner. To the organisers, this meeting was articulate, and to the Global scientific research community out there, you ought to know what is happening in the biorepository and biobanking community.

***Surely the evidence is there.....!***