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Conference: Australian Neurotrauma Symposium and Australasian Neuroscience Society

Our visit to Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, resulted in several successes for our research team as well as Drexel University as a whole. Overall, there were three highlights to the trip: the Australian Neurotrauma Symposium, the meeting of Australasian Neuroscience Society and our visit to the Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health in Melbourne, Australia.

I had the privilege of presenting a poster at both Australian Neurotrauma Symposium as well as Australasian Neuroscience Society. The Australian Neurotrauma Symposium was a short, two-day meeting held at the University of Tasmania. The meeting was informative and fruitful as I had the honor of receiving a Poster Presentation recognition award! My work was very well received and even sparked conversations about several potential opportunities for postdoctoral fellowship positions (with Dr. Howells at University of Tasmania and Dr. St John at Griffith University). Apart from attending the symposium and learning about some of the cutting edge research being performed overseas, our research team had the opportunity to visit the newly renovated research facilities at the University of Tasmania. Our tour of the facilities was guided by Dr. Graeme McCormack, who showed us the newly renovated tissue culture rooms (including the new stem cell tissue culture laboratories), microscopy rooms, electrophysiology rooms, and the bench-top rooms that are shared by all of the laboratories at the University. The tour was very interesting and good to see as the facilities were organized in a completely different style than what we have here at the College of Medicine campus.

The second highlight of the trip was the meeting of Australasian Neuroscience Society that took place in the same city (Hobart, Tasmania) at the Grand Chancellor Hotel (with beautifully distracting views, see picture). This meeting was a bit larger than the Neurotrauma Symposium, featuring even more cutting edge science performed in Australia, Asia, Europe, and North America. The meeting, which was a four-day event, featured a very good balance of speakers and topics, including sessions on trauma, inflammation, neurodegenerative disease, spinal cord injury, regeneration, and development of novel models. One particular session that was eye-catching revolved around developing models in invertebrates (i.e. decision making models, neural mechanisms and quantitative behavior). This session was both surprising and inspiring, featuring work that involves honey bees leaning abstract concepts, how polarization vision (an invertebrate behavior for the most part) can be used to develop novel GPS and
communication systems, and how visual target detection and identification decisions in jumping spiders can be used to develop new technologies.

The view from one of the conference rooms in the Grand Chancellor Hotel during the annual Australasian Neuroscience Society meeting in Hobart, Tasmania, Australia.

Apart from attending the two conferences in Hobart, Tasmania, we had the privilege to join our PI, Dr. Michael Lane, for a trip to the Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health in Melbourne, Australia. At the Florey Institute, Dr. Lane presented a seminar-style talk featuring the research we perform at Drexel University. Our visit also included meetings with Drs. Saunders and Dziegielewska and their research team, and a private tour of the state-of-the-art animal facilities at the Florey, led by Dr. Anthony Hannan.

It was an incredible trip, full of invaluable introductions, informative sessions, and breathtaking sights. I am very grateful to the Office of International Programs for giving me the financial support to make this trip a reality!