



From the 30th of September until the 3rd of October I visited the beautiful island “Les Embiez” in the south of France to attend the EMBO workshop on “Molecular advances and parasite strategies in host infection”. The study of parasitic organisms at the molecular level has resulted in many great new insights and provided a base for new treatment and prevention strategies and the aim of the EMBO workshop was to understand in detail how a wide range of mechanisms are controlled, developed and organised by the parasites. This entailed mechanisms such as modification of host immunity, diverse and virulence specific differentiation, expression of pathogenic molecules, control of gene expression, antigenic variation and unique metabolic pathways.

As such, well-known scientist from all around the world working on these topics, were present at Les Embiez to present their work and discuss their science, to fertilise new ideas and approaches in dealing with parasitic infections.

Unfortunately, due to some train delays during my travel I couldn't make it to the first session on Sunday evening in time, but I was just in time for the first dinner. At the dinner table I had an interesting talk with a French group who were working on the effects of malaria on haematopoiesis. As this is an upcoming field of research, lots is still to be discovered and talks went on till late. The first day started off with a session on cell biology, with keynote speaker David Sibley from the US. In a very interesting talk on microneme secretion in *Toxoplasma* he explained what factors are controlling microneme secretion and how this can be an important new target for treatment, which could also hold true for other apicomplexans and related protists.

After this session I remember a very cool talk on Trypanosome parasites, as Luisa Figueiredo explained that the adipose tissue serves as a major reservoir of *Trypanosoma brucei*. The main thought was that this was due to the low immunological activity in adipose tissue, however she showed that the immune cells are very active in this region during infection.

After lunch the subject of the talks were on host parasite interaction and immunity, of which I want to highlight the talk from one of the members of the French group that I talked to on the first night. Matthias Marti explained that immature gametocytes of *P. vivax* and *P. berghei* are relatively sparse in the blood circulation. He then compared tissue and blood samples from *Plasmodium*-infected patients, non-human primates and mice to identify the bone marrow as a major niche for parasite development.

After this session, it was time for my 2 minute turbo talk to introduce my poster, after which I had the time to present my poster to anyone who was interested. As I'm working in a small niche (free-living amoeba research), there weren't any other people present that were working on this subject.

However, I did get some attention and got some valuable new insights after discussing the poster with several people.

The second day was filled with interesting talks, of which I want to accentuate the keynote talk of Maria Mota. She explained that the metabolism of the host is an important factor in the development of either uncomplicated or severe malaria. Another interesting talk was that of Ian Gilbert, who showed that there were promising new drugs against parasites being developed in his institution, as a result from an innovative pipeline of neglected drug research. Then there was another turbo talk session and poster session, after which it was time for the farewell dinner.

After this dinner it was time to announce the winners of the poster prize, and to my big surprise I won the first place! As this was an event that needed celebration, party went on until late in the night.

Altogether the conference was a big success, as I got up to date with all fundamental research in the field of parasitology and was able to successfully present my research to a large group of scientists, all thanks to the NVP's travel grant!

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