Meeting reports

A World Without Cancer Threat

1–6 February 2021, Isanlu, Kogi State, Nigeria

With the support of the Biochemical Society, I facilitated a cancer awareness and education symposium, trained health personnel on cancer screening, screened patients for cervical and prostate cancers and dispensed free prescribed drugs to patients. This was to mark the official launch of the Dove-Haven Foundation (DHF) and commemorate World Cancer Day 2021. ‘A World Without Cancer Threat’ took place at Isanlu, Kogi State, Nigeria from 1 to 6 February 2021.

DHF is a non-profit organization whose programmes are designed to create awareness on early cancer screening, testing and prevention strategies and helping those already suffering from cancer. The organization has volunteers across Nigeria, and in the diaspora, and is situated in Kogi State, the only state sharing boundaries with 10 other states and thus well positioned for the engagement and impact of health intervention. Participants include government representatives such as the current Nigerian Minister of Health and former Minister of Health, as well as religious and community leaders, health professionals, oncologists, community health workers, nurses, members of the press/media, primary and tertiary healthcare staff members and students from secondary and tertiary education institutions.

More than 400 people participated in the symposium, with speakers from the USA, the UK and Nigeria. Twenty-three health personnel were trained on cervical cancer screening. The community medical engagement was successful based on the coverage, supplies, personnel, drug supply and the number of patients covered. We attended to more than 300 patients and screened over 150 people for cervical cancer and 35 people for prostate cancer. Sponsorship from the Biochemical Society was timely and useful in the production and purchase of education aid materials.

Funding for this event was awarded in advance of the Biochemical Society’s decision to reserve financial support for face-to-face meetings until October 2021, regardless of international restrictions.

Ekundayo Samuel (University of Ibadan, Nigeria)

Dynamic Cell IV

14–19 March 2021, Online

Dynamic Cell IV was run jointly by the Biochemical Society and the British Society for Cell Biology (BSCB) in a virtual format, with emphasis on networking and social events. The meeting started with a keynote talk by Enrico Coen, with a presentation that explored the biophysics driving the emergence of plant organ shape from cell growth. This was followed by a student/postdoc session in which the quality of talks was very high, with plenty of questions and feedback from attendees. Throughout the conference we operated an anonymous question system allowing anyone in the audience to ask questions to the speaker and this worked really well to boost engagement and provide a surfeit of questions – the discussions carried on into post-session ‘meet the speaker’ talks in many cases.

In the following 5 days, we heard many interesting talks by both senior and junior scientists working in the field of cell biology, with topics ranging from nematode neurons to cereal-killer fungi. We also presented one best talk prize and seven poster prizes and presented four medals from the two societies. In addition to the scientific sessions, we ran roundtable discussions spanning subjects such as grant writing, developing an independent career, communicating your science and improving the profile of minority groups in academia. We also ran a vibrant social programme each evening, with a (virtual) pub quiz, an online escape room and competitions using the drawing app Drawful2. It was great to ‘virtually’ see many attendees participating in the breakout rooms, roundtable discussions, and social events. We are planning to run this event again in 2024 or 2025.

Programme Coordinators:

Mike Deeks (University of Exeter, UK)
Anne Straube (University of Warwick, UK)
Binyam Mogessie (University of Bristol, UK)
Sarah Woolner (University of Manchester, UK)
Jeremy Carlton (King’s College London, UK)
Bungo Akiyoshi (University of Oxford, UK)

For more information:
www.biochemistry.org/Events