



SPPIRIT

Scottish Parasitology Partnership in
Research, Innovation and Training

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SPPIRIT Network Newsletter

January 2023

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SPPIRIT website launched!

We now have our very own [SPPIRIT website](#). Here you can find information on:

- About the network
- Past and upcoming events
- Links to Scottish parasitology institutes
- Resources
- Your SPPIRIT committee members
- SPPIRIT contact details

The website will continue to develop over time, with more resources and information on events being added that we think might be useful for our members.

We are grateful to the British Society for Parasitology for financially supporting the SPPIRIT website.

SPPIRIT Fellowship Writing Workshop takes place in Edinburgh

A subcommittee of SPPIRIT organised a one-day workshop on 'aiming for successful fellowship applications' held at the University of Edinburgh on the 29th of November 2022. This event, targeted at a group of 20 ECRs actively engaged with fellowship applications, covered the process in detail via a mixture of presentations

and learning activities undertaken individually and in small groups. By focussing on evaluating a real application submitted to Wellcome and the MRC, delegates gained insight into how the reviewing process actually works and what funders look for. Discussions focused on “dos and don’ts” for how to best present oneself in the application, including demonstrating an upwards trajectory, productivity and impact as well as avoiding common pitfalls in project development.

A workshop attendee said: “I learned a lot from working through a real fellowship application with experienced panellists. The insights from the workshop and the ongoing peer support are very encouraging.” The workshop was indeed a great networking opportunity among peers, which SPPIRIT is building upon with a new peer mentoring scheme specifically for members preparing fellowship applications.

This workshop was presented by Sarah Reece (University of Edinburgh), supported by Richard McCulloch (Glasgow University) and organised by committee members Emma Briggs (University of Edinburgh), Stephen Larcombe (University of Edinburgh), Andrew Maclean (University of Glasgow) and Megan Sloan (University of Glasgow).



SULSA Development Fund Workshop

An online SULSA Development Fund Workshop was hosted through the SPPIRIT network on 9th December. Attendees were able to pitch their project ideas and receive feedback from experienced panel members. Successful “pitchers” also received a small grant to help support their proposed project.

Feedback for this remote pitching session was constructive and positive:

PI of applicants – “The SULSA pitch and feedback sessions were really valuable to ECRs in my lab; advice from trusted experts who are not directly involved in a project is always useful, and included suggestions that I would not have thought to make, but that greatly improved the application.”

Applicant 1 – “It was very helpful having non-judgemental feedback from people outside of my field who also had insight into the goals and selection criteria of the funder. This feedback helped me tailor my application for a less specialized audience and shift the focus of certain sections to topics of greater interest

to the funder. I would recommend the pitch and peer revision approach to others and hope to see it extended to other funding schemes.”

Applicant 2 – “Having input from two people who didn't know either ourselves or the project background (and so had no preconceptions) was really helpful when writing our grant application. In addition, feedback on our application from Lucas, who had been involved with the funding in the past, meant that we were more confident in our application, and changed the focus of our written proposal to fit better with what the funders were looking for. I would definitely look to get feedback in a similar way in the future.”

Panel member 1 – “The support offered by SPPIRIT is a great opportunity to obtain feedback and insights from the scientific community on your funding application. I would strongly recommend researchers, specially ECRs, taking advantage of this initiative. I myself quite enjoyed engaging with motivated postdocs and learn more about their exciting research”.

Panel member 2 - “It was great to be able to give feedback on SULSA application and see early career researchers coming up with an exciting and well prepared project idea. I still remember how useful the help of senior colleagues was for my first funding attempts, and hope that the comments we provided fulfilled similar function. Best of luck to both applicants!”



IDRIS event takes place in Edinburgh

Infectious disease researchers from across Scotland gathered in Edinburgh on Friday 13th January for the 5th Infectious Disease Research Initiative Scotland (IDRIS) one-day symposium, hosted by the Edinburgh Infectious Diseases Network. The meeting featured an exciting series of oral presentations from Fellows and PIs based in The Universities of Dundee, Glasgow and Edinburgh, and two sessions for PhD students and Postdocs to present posters, with topics ranging from virology to microbiology to parasitology.

In addition to the oral presentation and poster sessions coordinated by IDRIS, SPPIRIT organised and chaired a 30 minute session for the event. If you were inspired to support or join the SPPIRIT network, then please get in touch! We also advertised an opportunity provided by SPPIRIT for Postdocs and final year PhD students to attend the Royal Society of Biology Lab Leadership Training at a special discounted rate (see newsletter entry below). Finally, our SPPIRIT session concluded with 6 ECR turbo talk presentations that were selected from the list of poster abstracts.



The selected speakers were:

- Hayder Al Mshelesh (Heriot-Watt University, Improved sample processing techniques for waterborne pathogen detection)
- Laura Confalonieri (The University of Edinburgh, The role of pH in detection of bacterial biofilms)

- Dominika Kwecka (The University of Edinburgh, Protein Kinase A is essential for fidelity of mitosis in sporozoites and controls malaria parasite transmission)
- Dr Marzuq Ungogo (The Roslin Institute, Identification of interferon stimulated genes that control Toxoplasma in porcine macrophages)
- Laurine Brouck (The University of Edinburgh, RNA editing ligase 1 as a drug target: on the road to lead generation)
- Ross Laidlaw (The University of Glasgow, TrAGEDy: Trajectory Alignment of Gene Expression Dynamics)



We hope all attendees enjoyed the IDRIS meeting and found it a useful occasion to meet colleagues and establish new collaborative links. Look out for the next SPPIRIT event when we host a session at the upcoming BSP Spring Meeting in Edinburgh!

Upcoming Event: Parasitology meeting on the functional validation of parasitic nematode genes @UoGlasgow

Registration is now open for a parasitology meeting being hosted by Dr Roz Laing at The University of Glasgow on 1st and 2nd March 2023: '**challenges, opportunities and new technologies for functional validation of parasitic nematode genes**'.

Speakers will include Collette Britton, Cedric Neveu, Vicky Hunt, Steve Doyle, Sarah Buddenborg, Tess Attenborough, Paul Airs, Jennifer McIntyre, Claude Charvet and Murray Selkirk.

The meeting is funded by a BBSRC International Partnership Award and is free to attend, but **limited to 40 places**. All welcome, but ECRs and students in particular are encouraged to register.

Registration link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/parasitology-meeting-functional-validation-of-parasitic-nematode-genes-tickets-513218950697>

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