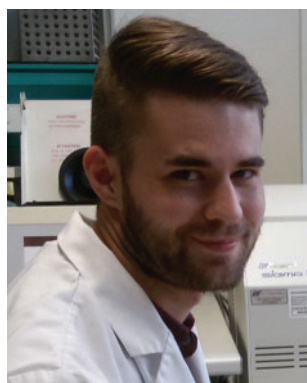


BD student Awardee values networking opportunities offered by the ASM Conference



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In 2015, I was the Tasmanian recipient of the annual Becton Dickinson (BD) Award, given to one student member of each state branch of the Australian Society of Microbiology. As a recipient of this award, I was given the opportunity to give an oral presentation at the 2015 ASM National Scientific Meeting in Canberra where I discussed some of the research I had been undertaking at the University of Tasmania relating to the characterisation of macrolide antibiotic resistance in nontypable *Haemophilus influenzae*. Dr Stefan Schwarz, of the Institute of Farm Animal Genetics of the Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut (FLI) in Germany, was also in attendance at the conference as an invited speaker. I first met Stefan at the ASM Student Breakfast where we discussed some of the research I had been doing and how it related to his own. He was also part of the audience during my presentation and we maintained contact with each other after the conference had concluded.

As a result of continuing correspondence between Stefan, myself and Dr Stephen Tristram, my primary PhD supervisor, I was

eventually given the opportunity to spend the February of 2016 living in Germany and working with Stefan at the Institute of Farm Animal Genetics, located at Mariensee, a district of Neustadt am Rübenberge in Lower Saxony. During my time at the institute, I worked alongside Stefan's group, performing studies on acquired antibiotic resistance determinants in *H. influenzae*. In doing so, I was exposed to a number of new techniques that I would not have been able to perform at my current facility, and I was also able to develop new professional and personal contacts. I returned home with a wealth of experience that I would not otherwise have, and I currently have plans to continue the study back in Tasmania, with the intention of publishing a manuscript and incorporating the work into my thesis.

I feel that my experiences at last year's ASM conference emphasise the value of making conference opportunities such as the BD awards available to student members of the ASM. My own participation at the conference and the subsequent developments that lead me to Germany have been invaluable, not just as a learning experience but also for potential future employment opportunities after I have completed my PhD. I believe my decision to apply for the BD award has opened up many doors for me, and for this I cannot thank BD or the ASM enough. As a result of my experiences, I can only encourage other student members to get out there and participate in initiatives like the BD awards and the annual ASM conferences wherever possible. The networking opportunities that these initiatives provide may prove to be a helpful way for many students to bridge the gap between study and research employment.



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