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# TRANSPLANTATION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

**Newsletter April 2012**

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## **Editorial Comment**

**Dear Members,**

Welcome to the April edition of the society newsletter. As many of you will know the great success of the society is based on the ongoing focus on research and education for our members. This is evidenced by such activities noted by the President & Honorary Secretary, the program for the upcoming postgraduate course in annual scientific meeting, and the enthusiasm of the travel grant reports from our younger members. Prudent management of society finances as seen in treasurer's report will ensure that these core activities will be protected well into the future.

The society through the standing committees have more recently become a valuable resource for the Australian Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation Authority. Geoff McCaughan and council have been working hard to balance the requirements of the authority and the utility of the

standing committees to clinical practice that has served transplanting units so well over the years in determining ideal common practices but at the same time recognizing the individual unit practices that best suit local circumstances around Australia and New Zealand. We appear to well placed for a win-win scenario in transplantation whilst maintaining other core society activities.

Please enjoy this issue and we look forward to your participation at the upcoming annual general meeting and annual scientific meeting in Canberra.

**Hilton Gock**

## **President's Message**

Among matters currently being considered by Council is a draft Memorandum of Understanding that has been developed by the RACP. The purpose of the MOU is to characterise the relationship that exists between the College and the Special Societies in relation to matters of mutual interest – these include but are not limited to education for trainees and fellows, continuing professional development (CPD), assessment of overseas trained physicians (OTP) and international medical graduates (IMG), policy and advocacy, medical research, intellectual property and provision of services. In relation to the provision of services, the College currently provides office space for the TSANZ executive officers as well as the executive of most other Special Societies. This space is currently rent-free but it is anticipated that the College will begin to charge rent this year. I along with the Presidents of other Special Societies have written to the RACP to highlight the unfunded services that the Special Societies provide to the College particularly in regard to the education and training of trainees and fellows. Nonetheless, it appears likely that the special Societies will need to cover their own office rental costs in the future in which case the increased costs of running our Society (and other Special Societies) may require an increase in the annual membership fees. At present, TSANZ

currently shares an office suite with ANZSN and ANZAN. The existing office space is cramped and generally unsatisfactory for our 3 societies. Our 3 societies are currently negotiating collectively with the College to move to a larger suite within the College building.

The 30<sup>th</sup> annual scientific meeting of our Society will be held this year and represents a major milestone for our Society. Planning for this year's meeting and post-graduate course is at an advanced stage. Helen Pilmore and Adam Bartlett have prepared an excellent program with 3 confirmed high quality international speakers. John Kanellis and Kelli Macdonald are preparing the program for the Post-Graduate Course which will combine lectures in basic immunobiology and clinical transplantation. This year there will be a particular focus on the management of infectious diseases in transplantation.

In 2013, in addition to our own annual scientific meeting in Canberra, we have two major international congresses coming to Sydney. The 19th Annual Scientific Congress of the International Liver Transplantation Society will be held in July and is expected to attract 1000 delegates. This will be followed in November by the 12<sup>th</sup> International Congress of the International Society for Organ Donation and Procurement (ISODP).

Finally, on behalf of the Society I would like congratulate Dr Tim Mathew for his AM award in the recent Australia Day Honours. The Award recognises Tim's lifelong commitment to improving the health of Australians with kidney disease both as a nephrologist and as an advocate through Kidney Health Australia.

**Peter Macdonald**  
*President, TSANZ*

## **Secretary's Report**

Since the last newsletter the major news to report was the highly successful TSANZ-Australian Society of Immunology workshop that was held in conjunction with the ASI meeting in Adelaide. The Society sponsored 3 very high profile international speakers, Professor Megan Sykes (co-sponsored with the ASI), Professor Kathryn Wood and Professor Nancy Reinsmoen. TSANZ also provided travel awards to allow society members to attend the ASI and present their scientific work and participate in the workshop.

### **TSANZ-ASI Luminex and Tolerance Workshop in Adelaide December 2011**

The workshop began on the Sunday and was well attended by local and interstate members of the

Society. The day was divided into two parts with discussions centering around the use of Luminex antibody testing in clinical transplantation in the morning and discussion of Transplantation Tolerance protocols in the afternoon. Due to a motor vehicle accident 3 weeks before she was to fly to Australia, Professor Adriana Zeevi from the University of Pittsburgh, who was due to be the keynote speaker in the morning, was unable to attend the workshop. The Society was extremely fortunate that Professor Nancy Reinsmoen from Cedars-Sinai was able to attend at short notice. Professor Reinsmoen is a past president of the American Society of Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics and is extensively involved in organ allocation protocols through her work with UNOS Histocompatibility committee. The TSANZ's Rhonda Holdsworth chaired the morning session. It began with Professor Reinsmoen leading the discussion with a current description of transplant algorithms in the US. In particular she discussed the role of the calculated PRA (cPRA) and unacceptable Antigen and indicated that many centres in the USA are now moving to prospective flow Cytometric cross matching for deceased organ donation. She also indicated differences in Antigen density on solid phase beads, explaining differences between conventional CDC crossmatches and the Luminex determined antibodies.

The workshop format continued with representatives from all of the tissue typing laboratories in Australia and New Zealand presenting their current algorithms and work up protocols, which served to indicate the difference between states in terms of technology platforms (GenProbe/One Lambda), frequency of solid phase testing (Luminex) and performance of B cell crossmatch (prospectively, retrospectively or only when requested). Professor Bruce Pussell from NSW presented a large retrospective analysis of a cohort of Australian renal patients indicating how solid phase testing impacts on kidney transplant outcomes. Prominent TSANZ society members including Professor Jeremy Chapman, A/Professor Josette Eris, Professor Graeme Russ and Professor Bruce Pussell gave their clinical experience in using the currently available tests. The morning provided a venue for robust discussion of the pros and cons of current typing methods, and was well attended by clinicians and tissue typing scientists from all States. It highlighted the current controversies including antibody modality testing pre-transplant (on the waiting list), cross-matching testing on the day of allocation and lack of consensus of the frequency/role of antibody testing post transplant. This meeting was the first extensive clinician – tissue typing meeting that has been held

exclusively related to HLA and Luminex issues, and is an Australian fore-runner for the International Transplantation Society Antibody consensus meeting in Rome in May 2012.

The afternoon workshop session was devoted to a discussion of Transplant Tolerance and was chaired by Professor Geoff Hill from Brisbane and Associate Professor Frank Ierino from Melbourne. The focus was on working towards a common platform where an Australian Tolerance Protocol could potentially emerge. The discussion was kick-started by Professor Megan Sykes (Columbia University, New York), who provided the update on the seminal studies of Transplantation Tolerance from the MGH in Boston. This was followed by Professor Kathryn Wood (Oxford) who described the European Tolerance Trials, and the approaches being taken there.

On the basis of previous discussions held at the Canberra meeting with the Tolerance Interest Group a focus of the Adelaide workshop was T reg cell therapy and how this might translate into a clinical trial. TSANZ Society past-president Professor Bruce Hall gave a historic overview of the development of the Treg field in Transplantation. Protocols to identify Tregs were discussed, in particular Professor Barbara Fazekas de St Groth offered to provide training for groups interesting in developing common Flow Cytometric identification protocols, based on unique T reg surface markers. Dr Rob Carroll and A/Professor Simon Barry described their identification protocols and the discovery of new Treg markers. Professor Hill gave a unique perspective of a cellular haematologist and the regulatory challenges that will need to be overcome in the getting a clinical trial in Australia. These preliminary discussions will form the basis of the next meeting of the Tolerance Interest Group in June at the TSANZ.

### **Transplantation at the Australian Society of Immunology Meeting**

An aim of TSANZ Council was to try to increase the profile of Transplantation Research in Immunology at the ASI meeting. This goal was admirably achieved by plenary sessions presented by TSANZ sponsored visiting speakers. On Monday 12<sup>th</sup> in the Session Society members Professor Derek Hart and Dr Patrick Bertolino presented their research in Dendritic Cell and Antigen Presentation Session. Professor Megan Sykes chaired the Autoimmunity session in which Associate Professor Shane Grey presented his work on B cell immunobiology in Autoimmunity.

The Plenary Session on Tuesday saw Professor Megan Sykes and Professor Geoff Hill present in a solid Transplantation themed Plenary Session. Professor Sykes is the Director of the Columbia Centre for Translational Immunology at Columbia

University and spoke on "Translational Studies of Allograft Tolerance". Professor Hill gave a perspective from the Bone Marrow Transplantation field and spoke on "Antigen presentation in transplantation: Where and When" (see picture). On Tuesday afternoon, a Transplantation Symposium was chaired by Dr Claire Jessup and A/Professor Stephen Alexander, in which Professor Kerry Williams spoke on corneal transplantation and A/Prof Toby Coates spoke on pancreatic islet transplantation. A highlight of this session were presentations by young TSANZ members Renee Robb (President's Prize winner 2011), Nathan Zammit Eithne Cunningham and Motoko Koyama. This symposium was very well attended with over 150 delegates listening to the Transplantation themed talks and showcasing the range of Australian Transplantation Research.

On Wednesday Professor Kathryn Wood gave another Transplantation based Plenary talk entitled "Regulatory T cells in transplantation – from preclinical models to clinical study".

In the remainder of the meeting members of the society were also prominently represented and in particular in the annual Kevin Lafferty Debate, held on Wednesday evening. From the TSANZ Shane Grey (pictured), Toby Coates and Barbara Fazekas de St Groth debated the topic that "RGMS will make our lives easier".

The TSANZ provided 10 travel grants to allow members to attend and present their work at the ASI. These were to Eithne Cunningham, Min Hu, Aislin Meehan, Renee Robb, Jeanette Villanueva, Yik Wen Loh, Nathan Zammit, Jonathan Downing, Alycia Thornton, Sam Fidler and Narelle Watson. With industry support from Novartis Pharma, the TSANZ brought 3 leading Transplantation scientists to Australia for the meeting. All of the International Visitors used the opportunity to interact with other members of the Society by visiting other TSANZ members and giving talks in both Melbourne (Megan Sykes and Nancy Reinsmoen) and Sydney (Megan Sykes and Kathryn Wood). Overall, the experiment of a satellite TSANZ scientific meeting approximately 6 months after the main meeting was an outstanding success. The society should consider a regular yearly scientific exchange, possibly with the ASI meeting to further publicize transplantation research for the wider scientific community and to encourage cross fertilization between disciplines.

The Society has also been active in supporting other upcoming transplant related meetings. Attention of the membership is drawn to the 9<sup>th</sup> International Summer School on Immunogenetics which will be held 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> of November 2012 in

Victor Harbor South Australia, which is a training course for students, post-doctoral scientists and laboratory scientists interested in Tissue Typing and HLA.

As usual, members are strongly urged to apply for the Society awards and travel grants to upcoming meetings. All of the details can be found on the society website [www.tsanz.com](http://www.tsanz.com). I strongly encourage all members to consider encouraging other clinicians and scientists with an interest in Transplantation to join TSANZ. Look around you and if you can identify a clinician or scientist who has made significant contributions to the field, please encourage them to apply for the Ian McKenzie award (deadline end of April).

The upcoming TSANZ ASM has again produced an outstanding program, ably organized by Dr Helen Pilmore and Dr Adam Bartlett – this should be an excellent meeting where the best of Australian Science in Transplantation is presented.

Finally, as there are an increasing number of Transplant related emails coming through Aviva and Sommer's hands, the Council has decided that a monthly email update will be circulated to all members to keep them updated on "All Things Transplant". This will also be an excellent means to advertise for students, fellows, upcoming local meetings and job vacancies. I would like to add a feature in this newsletter regarding recent publications in the Transplant field from TSANZ members – any commentary on these articles would be gladly received. So I would like to invite all members to submit any citations to published papers to Aviva, Sommer or myself for inclusion in the newsletter. We will add these as a separate listing to the newsletter on a monthly basis. This will be a great way to see what your colleagues are publishing and make people aware of what great work you are doing – it may even increase your citations!

Look forward to seeing everyone again in Canberra at the ASM.

**Toby Coates**  
*Honorary Secretary, TSANZ*

## Treasurer's Report

The TSANZ remains in a strong financial position, as we move into 2012. With this in mind Council has not felt it necessary to increase the annual membership subscriptions for 2012, which remain at \$220 and include TTS membership. This represents excellent value, and can be paid online now through the TSANZ website at [www.tsanz.com.au](http://www.tsanz.com.au)

In December, the TSANZ Luminex/Tolerance Workshop held in Adelaide was a great success. This meeting was supported by some of the money which the Society received from the successful hosting of the 2008 TTS Meeting in Sydney. It is planned to use more of this money for another "project" in 2012. Nothing is locked in yet, so your suggestions are welcome and will be considered by Council.

**Scott Campbell**  
*Treasurer, TSANZ*

## Advisory Committees & Working Groups

Council has changed the names of the previously called *Standing Committees* to *Advisory Committees* and *Working Groups*. The former include Donor Surgeons and Co-ordinators, Renal, Liver, Lung, Cardiac, and Pancreas. Working groups include Tolerance, Pediatrics, Donor, Cornea and Xenotransplantation. The reason for distinguishing the two roles is to reflect that the Advisory Committees have responsibilities related to the OTA as well as TSANZ and work closely with OTA on several issues.

The Advisory Committees now all have TORs and are supported in their work by two Project Officers funded by OTA. All Advisory Committees have had teleconferences since face-to-face meetings in June 2011. There are some small changes to our current Consensus Statements that will reflect change in practice related to urgent listing and donor age in the field of Cardiac transplants. The Donor Surgeon and Co-ordinator committee is working hard re: the donor electronic record and an audit of donor utilization. The renal Advisory committee is currently tweaking issues re allocation algorithms.

Discussion with OTA Re: second version of the current Consensus Statements on Organ and Recipient allocation have begun.

**Geoff McCaughan**  
*Chair, Advisory Committees/Working Groups*

## Education & Science Report

**30<sup>th</sup> Annual Scientific Meeting**  
**27<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2012**

This is the fourth year of the ASM at the Manning Clark Centre venue. The meeting this year is

convened by Helen Pilmore and Adam Bartlett. An outstanding scientific program has been put together to cover the major clinical and scientific issues in transplantation of today. The plenary sessions and state-of-the-art concurrent sessions will cover the latest understanding of transplant immunology, recipient outcomes in the region, important recipient issues such as obesity, cancer and cardiovascular risk. Cutting-edge updates cover more controversial issues such as organ donation strategies, matching donor and recipient risks and new insights in assessing sensitisation with tissue typing and managing antibody mediated rejection.

Our convenors are also to be credited for securing three highly distinguished international speakers namely Prof Jonathan S Bromberg (University of Maryland School of Medicine, USA), A/Prof Greg Knoll (Ottawa Hospital & Ottawa Hospital Research Institute, Canada) and Dr Daniel Azoulay (University Hospital of Geneva, Switzerland). The speakers will make significant contributions to the program and postgraduate course.

Delegates could also look forward to an enjoyable social program to catch up with colleagues either at the cocktail party, conference dinner or at the second TSANZ donate life fun run/walk held on the morning of Thursday, 28th June. The traditional high quality catering and bottomless coffee throughout the day should round off one of the most exciting ASM meetings to date.

### **Post-Graduate Training Course 25<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2012**

Kelli Macdonald and John Kanellis are convening the course. The solid program is will be an up-to-date overview of the fundamental aspects of transplant immunology and clinical transplantation with presentations by local and international experts. In addition this year, the course will contain a session on infectious disease in transplantation chaired by Prof Debbie Marriot from St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney which should prove a valuable and highly relevant addition to the course. It is likely that such an outstanding program will be well subscribed so we would recommend early registration to avoid disappointment.

## **Membership**

Since the last newsletter, Council welcomed the following new members:-

### **TSANZ**

Mayank Bhandari, Daniel Chambers, Kumud Dhital, Lloyd D'Orsogna, Jonathan Downing, Samantha

Fidler, Mark Holmes, Peter Hopkins, Melanie Lavender, Tanya McWilliams and Alycia Thornton.

### **TNA/TSANZ**

Trevor Cherry, Corina Jary, Maree Jarrett, Sharon Lawrence, Margaret Philpott, Janine Sawyer and Maggie Shariat.

### **ATCA/TSANZ**

Victoria Dale, Nina Klein, Angela McInnes and Jo Sanders.

### **RESIGNATIONS**

Since the last newsletter, Council has accepted the following resignations: Rochelle Boyd, Nicholas Brook, Albert Chui, Yiling Fu, Michelle Glasel, Margaret Gleeson, Allison Hinckson, Julie Jonsson, Catherine Robinson, Paul Snelling, Katherine Watson, Georgia Whitman and Alan Wigg.

## **Society Awards and Grants**

The Society provides a number of benefits for members, which include support to attend national and international transplantation meetings and reduced fees at meetings sponsored by the society.

The eligibility criteria for each award are outlined on the TSANZ website:

[www.tsanz.com.au/awardsandfellowships/index.asp](http://www.tsanz.com.au/awardsandfellowships/index.asp)

## **Travel Grant Award Reports**

### **41<sup>st</sup> Annual Scientific Meeting of the Australasian Society for Immunology (ASI) Adelaide, South Australia 11<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> December 2011**

#### **Eithne Cunningham**

I would like to thank TSANZ for providing me with a travel grant to attend the 41<sup>st</sup> Australasian Society for Immunology Annual Meeting held in Adelaide, South Australia from 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> December 2011.

The meeting opened with the Sunday workshops on 11<sup>th</sup> December. I attended the ASI-TSANZ Luminex and Tolerance workshop which featured a range of national and international speakers addressing current topics in transplantation. The morning sessions focused on the role of Luminex antibody detection in clinical transplantation and some of the advantages and problems associated with the assay. It included summary data from the different states in Australia and New Zealand, highlighting the similarities and differences in protocols used by the tissue typing laboratories,

and case studies describing some of the difficulties encountered by them. It was interesting for me as a non-clinical scientist to gain more insight into how this process works.

During the afternoon we had a number of talks on regulatory T cells and tolerance induction in solid organ transplantation and some of the factors that need to be considered with this type of therapy. The speakers included Megan Sykes, Kathryn Wood, Bruce Hall and Geoff Hill. They addressed topics ranging from the requirements that must be fulfilled in the laboratory before moving into clinical trials and the role of the identification of a molecular signature of tolerance in transplant recipients to the differences between natural and antigen-specific regulatory T cells and issues surrounding the safety of regulatory T cell therapy. It also featured updates from a number of laboratories around Australia on their current work in immune monitoring, including recent data from Simon Barry on a potential new regulatory T cell biomarker, PI16, which was presented in more detail at the main meeting on Wednesday. The workshop concluded with a general discussion on what is required to move regulatory T cell therapy towards the clinic in Australia.

The main meeting opened on Sunday evening with the first plenary session and the welcome function. The rest of the meeting generally consisted of a plenary session in the morning, a symposium in the late morning and one in the afternoon (with four concurrent sessions) and a poster session in the early evening. A number of the plenary sessions included talks in the areas of tolerance and transplantation which made things easier for me as I didn't have to choose between different presentations. I was pleased to be provided with the opportunity to give an oral presentation on my work at the meeting. I spoke at the Transplantation session on Tuesday afternoon and it was a great chance to get feedback from experienced transplant immunologists on my research on the induction of tolerance in a skin transplant model by expressing high levels of donor antigen in recipient livers.

Once I had presented my work I was able to relax and take advantage of the great social program available during the meeting. I attended the Women in Immunology breakfast on Monday morning and it was interesting to hear the variety of issues experienced by women at different levels during the development of their research careers. I didn't take part in the student function on Tuesday evening but I heard from a number of students that they really enjoyed the opportunity to mingle with their peers and to meet the invited speakers in an informal setting. The conference dinner on Wednesday turned into a great night and the band had everybody up dancing in the end and asking for an encore. Earlier in the evening Richard Flavell gave the band a break and

entertained us with his science-themed songs! My table was sure that we would get extra points in the limerick competition as we had our entry read out by someone who is actually from Limerick, Ireland but unfortunately it wasn't enough to win us a prize – maybe next year...

Overall, my first visit to the annual ASI meeting was a very informative and enjoyable experience and I would like to thank TSANZ again for providing me with a travel grant to attend.

#### **Min Hu**

I would like to thank the TSANZ committee for the generous travel grant to attend 41<sup>st</sup> Australia Society for Immunology Annual Meeting (ASI) 2011.

The Australasian Society for Immunology Incorporated (ASI) was created by the amalgamation in 1991 of the Australian Society for Immunology, formed in 1970, and the New Zealand Society for Immunology, formed in 1975. The aim of the Society is to encourage and support the discipline of immunology in the Australasian region. It is a broadly-based Society, embracing clinical and experimental, cellular and molecular immunology in humans and animals. The Society provides a network for the exchange of information and for collaboration within Australia, New Zealand and overseas. The Annual Scientific Meeting is the premier event on the ASI calendar each year.

The 41st meeting of the Australasian Society for Immunology was held December 11th – 15th 2011 at the Adelaide Convention Centre, South Australia. There was transplantation Luminex and Tolerance workshop was held by ASI-TSANZ in the meeting. The 41st meeting is a broadly-based immunology meeting as well as my research interest including transplantation immunology, innate immunity, autoimmunity and antigen presentation.

The conference provided peak forums for immunological researchers including transplantation immunology the country. There are excellent international speakers include Prof. Megan Sykes from Columbia University, Kathryn Wood, University of Oxford and Professor Adriana Zeevi University of Pittsburgh, who are experts in transplantation field. Other international speakers include Lisa Coussens - University of California, San Francisco, USA, Richard A Flavell - Yale University School of Medicine, USA, Paul Kubes - University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, Alberto Mantovani - University of Milan, Italy, Andrew McKenzie - MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology, United Kingdom, Ed Palmer - University Hospital, Basel, Switzerland, Shigeru Saito - University of

Toyama, Japan, Joachim Schultze - LIMES Institute, Bonn, Germany, Dr Megan Skyes - Columbia Center for Translational Immunology (CCTI), Raz Yirmiya, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel.

As NHMRC Postdoctoral Research Fellow working in the Centre for Transplant and Renal Research (CTRR), my research focuses on transplantation immunology including transplant rejection and tolerance in humanised mouse model of islet transplantation. I talked my work on ASI-TSANZ Luminex and Tolerance Workshop. I also presented two posters as first author using a humanized mouse model of human islet allograft rejection. I was also involved in another poster related to kidney autoimmunity disease.

Key areas at the meeting that interested me were: Translational studies of allograft tolerance by Megan Sykes, antigen presentation in transplantation by Geoffrey Hill, regulatory T cells in transplantation-from preclinical models to clinical study by Kathryn Wood, ASI-TSANZ Luminex and Tolerance Workshop. Attended the meeting has increase my knowledge in the field of immunology and also provide the opportunity to meet and listen to talks by other expert researchers in the field.

In summary the ability to attend this meeting allowed me to learn about the "cutting edge" studies in my area, to learn more broadly about immunological mechanisms, and to meet with people who were able to offer new ideas related to my current studies.

#### **Yik Wen Loh**

I would like to thank the TSANZ committee for providing me with a travel grant to attend the 41<sup>st</sup> Australasian Society of Immunology Annual Meeting, held in Adelaide last December. It was my 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive attendance at ASI meeting. Attending ASI meetings had been a great way to keep abreast with the latest findings in the field of Immunology as well as emerging themes and new technologies. It was also a good opportunity to present my work and to engage in mind-stimulating discussion with fellow immunologists. My PhD work was presented on two posters, one on the findings of cross-reactive primed CD4+ T cells being uniquely capable of initiating skin and islet graft and the other on visualising skin graft rejection in real time using multiphoton microscopy, a work done in collaboration with Michael Kuligowski.

I was delighted to see a new collaboration between ASI and TSANZ at this meeting. The ASI-TSANZ Luminex and Tolerance Workshop was held prior to the start of the meeting. The workshop provided informative sessions on the usage of Luminex defined HLA antibodies in organ allocation and post transplantation monitoring as well as robust

discussion of the latest progresses in translation of regulatory T cells (Tregs) into clinical therapies to induce organ tolerance. Invited speakers include Nancy Reinsmoen, Kathryn Wood and Megan Skykes. Both Kathryn and Megan also presented their work in plenary sessions of the meeting. Tregs are of particular interest as there is ongoing work in our lab investigating the potential of Tregs in suppressing the activity of primed T cells, in order to prolong allograft survival.

The meeting covered an extensive range of immunology topics, ranging from innate immunity, dendritic cells and antigen presentation, lymphocyte activation and differentiation, cytokines and inflammation, bacteria/viral/parasite infections, autoimmunity, allergy, vaccines, tumour immunology to transplantation. Although only a small emphasis of the meeting was on transplantation, the wealth of immunology knowledge covered in the plenaries, symposia and poster presentations improved my understanding of the biological basis of the immune system and helped me come to grips with the complex and controversial transplantation literature.

On the lighter side of things, I also attended the ASI student function held at the cosy Adelaide Boat House. It was a fun night of trivia with great food, wine and interesting conversations with a handful of sporting plenary speakers and fellow young immunologists (never mind that someone spilt wine on me).

The meeting was a wonderful experience and I had benefited enormously from the exposure to immunology from world-class researchers. I would like to once again sincerely thank TSANZ for its generous financial support.

#### **Aislin Meehan**

The Australasian Society for Immunology (ASI) held their 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Scientific meeting in Adelaide, SA, in December 2011. With close to 600 registrants from 16 different countries, it was sure to be a great success.

On the Sunday prior to the official conference start, satellite workshops were held to showcase key areas in fields of scientific research. One of the four workshops was the ASI-TSANZ Luminex and Tolerance Workshop and another was the morning Postgraduate Workshop at which guest speakers presented to the students on aspects of their research and their research careers. At the Postgraduate Workshop we had the pleasure of listening to invited speaker Prof. Kathryn Wood (Transplantation Research Immunology Group, Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences, University of Oxford) discuss the career pathway

that lead to where she is today and she also highlighted how important transplantation has been in contributing to key areas of immunology and general scientific research (such as antigen presentation and immune tolerance). (See attached photo - Aislin with Kathryn Wood)

At the conclusion of the Postgraduate Workshop I was awarded an 'Active Participation' (aka "noisy") prize for actively asking questions and contributing to the general discussion throughout the sessions. I then attended the afternoon session of the workshop run by TSANZ with presentations regarding 'moving Tregs into the clinic for tolerance in solid organ transplantation' and the 'safety of cell therapy'. The workshop was closed with a discussion of ways to improve and standardise research of transplant patient outcomes and data across Australia and New Zealand.

The official ASI welcome function kicked off the start to an enjoyable, intellectual, and inspiring conference. There were many diverse topics of immunological research covered throughout the conference including a Transplantation session of presentations and a subsequent afternoon poster session at which I presented my PhD research.

The student function BBQ dinner and trivia night at the Adelaide Rowing Club was a sell-out. Invited speakers were encouraged to attend to chat and interact with the students in an informal atmosphere and to assist (however poorly) at answering many general knowledge trivia questions. All students and invited guest speakers who attended had a great night!

The very first ASI fun run was held early the next morning with a 4.5km jog along the Torrens River. It was a pleasant morning and refreshing start to the day. I'm sure this event will become a regular addition to future ASI programmes.

An annual event prior to the conference dinner was the comical Lafferty Debate. The outcome of the debate was rather controversial with the affirmative somehow winning the topic "RGMS will make our lives easier"; thus providing a popular subject for various limericks written during the courses of the conference dinner. The live band performing had all the young and not-so-young up on the dance floor, including ASI president David Tarlinton grooving his moves and WEHI's Phil Hodgkin krumping in style. Richard Flavell was also a popular favourite on the acoustic guitar, performing three original songs with a scientific twist.

The conference closed the next day with the award of various national and international travel grants and bursaries. All in all it was a fantastic week and I thank

TSANZ for providing me with a travel bursary to attend and I look forward to ASI 2012.

### **Renee Robb**

I would like to thank TSANZ for the travel grant that allowed me to attend the Australasian Society for Immunology Annual meeting in Adelaide from 11-15 December 2011.

The conference began with 2 plenary talks by Richard Flavell and Jamie Rossjohn, followed by the welcome function. The welcome function was on the river next to the conference centre and certainly lasted for a little longer than anticipated for many people.

The student function was held at the Adelaide Rowing club and provided a great opportunity to mingle with plenary speakers from the meeting. Each table was allocated a topic, which placed people with similar interests together for the evening and made for easy-flowing conversation.

Personally, the highlight of the meeting was the presentation by Paul Kubes on changes in immune responses in the liver following sterile inflammation that result in increased susceptibility to infection. While this is something completely unrelated to my field, it was just one of those talks where I find myself intrigued by the work being completed. The conference dinner was held at the convention centre, with the highlight certainly being the entertainment provided by Richard Flavell, who performed some entertaining songs that we can all relate to about the perils of science.

Overall, ASI was a great meeting with internationally renowned speakers and a wide range of topics to keep everyone interested. The quality scientific programme combined with lots of functions always makes ASI a fun and enjoyable, yet educational meeting to attend.

### **Jeanette Villanueva**

For a few days in December 2011, immunologists met in Adelaide for the annual meeting of the Australasian Society for Immunology. I had never been to Adelaide before so I was excited to finally get the chance to visit. I was fortunate enough to obtain a travel grant from TSANZ to attend the conference and present two pieces of work. The first was an oral presentation in the *New Investigator Award* session on the requirement of the signaling adapter molecule TRAF2 (TNFR associated factor 2) in the homeostatic maintenance of CD8 memory-phenotype T cells. The second was a poster presentation on how TRAF2 governs the T cell mediated allograft response.

The conference began with workshops on mucosal immunology, or tumour immunology. This year saw the introduction of the joint ASI-TSANZ Luminex and Tolerance Workshop and included a strong focus on using regulatory T cells in the clinic with talks from Dr. Megan Sykes, Professor Kathryn Wood, Professor Bruce Hall and Professor Geoffrey Hill.

One of the themes throughout the conference was lymphocyte differentiation, activation and immune regulation. One topic was the identification of 'signature genes' how these genes can influence the differentiation of different immune cell subsets. Axel Kallies (Walter and Eliza Hall Institute) discussed the role of the transcription factor Blimp1 and its requirement for short-lived CD8+ T cell effector differentiation. Leonard Harrison (also from WEHI) presented data on a novel islet antigen specific regulatory T cell population not derived from pre-existing CD4+CD25hi T cells (conventional Tregs). These cells express high levels of CD52 and were shown to be suppressive without the requirement of cell-cell contact. For the Treg enthusiasts, Professor Joachim Schultze (Life & Medical Sciences Institute, Germany) presented on the role of SATB1 (special AT-rich binding protein 1 – involved in regulating chromatin structure and gene expression) in determining the fate of regulatory T cells. A correlation between Foxp3 expression and SATB1 expression was found with increased SATB1 causing a decrease in Foxp3 expression and loss of Treg suppressive function.

Talks highlighting unique differentiation mechanisms and activation of T cell subsets helped me look at my work from a different perspective. Overall, the conference gave me the opportunity to meet fellow immunologists and discuss our work, allowing me to gain greater insight into our results and ideas to explore as I work towards completing my PhD this year. Thank you to TSANZ for your support.

For those that were keen to enjoy some mid-conference exercise and fresh Adelaide air, the inaugural ASI fun run gave an opportunity to take in the scenery along the Torrens River.

The first plenary given by Dr. Richard Flavell (Yale University) was a very interesting talk on inflammasome pathways of the innate immune system and how they can regulate the gut microbiota through the induction of cytokines. We later found out that not only did Dr. Flavell's interests include the inflammasome, but he was also a keen song writer and guitarist and we were able to experience this first hand during the conference dinner.

#### **Nathan Zammit**

I would like to express my gratitude to the Transplantation Society of Australia and New Zealand

(TSANZ) for the Travel grant I was awarded. The award allowed me to attend the Australasian Society for Immunology (ASI) International Conference 2011, held in Adelaide, Australia.

At this conference I was given the opportunity to give an oral presentation of my work. My presentation was entitled "Improved survival characteristics of an inflammatory suppressed allograft". The presentation included molecular and cellular evidence of the grafts role in the process of allograft rejection and tolerance induction. A finding which we believe may lead to novel, donor graft-targeted anti-rejection therapies.

There were many topics covered in the conference, which greatly increased my understanding of immunology. However, some of which I thought were really interesting included talks focusing on transplantation, inflammation and autoimmunity. I also found a talk by Professor Kathryn Wood very intriguing. Kathryn spoke of the identification of a new role for IFN $\gamma$  in the activity of Tregs during induced operational tolerance. Work in this field is very exciting as it has the potential to produce cell-based anti-rejection therapies to induce long-term graft survival to replace high-dose immunosuppression.

Some other highlights from the conference included the informative Sunday Workshops. I attended the TSANZ workshop. Also being a PhD student myself, I found the student function to be a fantastic evening, giving me the opportunity to network with my peers and esteemed professors in a relaxed informal environment. This was a great opportunity, as like many other students I found networking in this environment to be much easier, giving me the confidence to network with (or annoy!) professors at other times during the congress.

The Lafferty debate was another highlight for me. To watch professors debate a topic using levity was very enjoyable, especially as one of the speakers was my own supervisor Assoc. Prof. Shane Grey. This year the topic was "RGMS will make our lives easier".

On the whole, I found the congress to be informative and a very valuable experience. I have taken away a number of good ideas from these talks to apply to my own research, and have gained a greater understanding of where the field of immunology stands in respect to new cutting edge basic research and translational research. Furthermore, I was able to meet a number of inspiring/leading scientists in the field.

Thank you for providing me with this wonderful opportunity.

**The 13<sup>th</sup> World Congress of International  
Pancreas and Islet Transplant Association (IPITA)  
Prague, Czech Republic  
1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> June 2011**

**Wayne Hawthorn**

Prague was one of the nicest possible places to hold a conference being such a beautiful city. The conference itself was very well attended and had a number of workshop sessions that were also very useful to attend. There were an impressive number of speakers from all areas of the fields of transplantation, which allowed for a varied and interesting program. There were approximately 400 attendees from around the world. Australia was strongly represented by a large contingent of attendees.

There were a number of concurrent sessions, which provided a good choice of specialist areas to attend. I was pleased to be able to present our work on behalf of the Australian Islet Transplant consortium "Islet preparations from Pancreases Donated after Cardiac Death fail to achieve the criteria required for transplantation." We also had a number of other presentations "Expression of pro- and anti-apoptotic molecules of the Bcl-2 family in human islets post-isolation, Protease Activated Receptor-1 (PAR-1) activation by thrombin is protective in Human Islets if the Endothelial Protein C receptor (ECPR) is occupied, Protease-Activated Receptors (PARs), MAPK and NF $\kappa$ B signalling in response to Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS) and Apoptosis in Human Pancreatic Islets, and Molecular profiling demonstrates better outcomes for reversal of diabetes in long-term culture of neonatal islet cell clusters."

For me the highlights of the meeting were not only in the field of pancreatic and islet transplantation but included the Workshop sessions. With almost four days of presentations ranging from hour-long plenary sessions to "mini-orals" and sometimes four rooms running simultaneously. In order to attend sessions that interested me it was a matter of running between rooms and you had to be very selective to be able to get from the main auditoriums to the breakout rooms on the 21<sup>st</sup> floor. The oral sessions were all quite interesting but unfortunately due to concurrent session in addition to multiple poster sessions it was a matter of selecting the talks of most interest and briefly below are some of the highlights;

A number of significant milestones were reached with presentations from Hans Sollinger, Madison, USA on their [1,000 consecutive simultaneous pancreas~kidney transplants](#) and then David Sutherland, Minneapolis, USA presentation of outcomes in more than 2,000 pancreas transplants at a single centre!

Parallel session 2 – Open oral presentations Topic: Results of clinical autologous and allogeneic islet transplantation insulin independence and metabolic outcomes in a large cohort of total pancreatectomy and islet autotransplants which was presented by M., Bellin, from Minneapolis, USA, This was David Sutherlands group who continue to be the major referral unit in the USA for islet autografts and their presentation showed a significant difference in outcomes of earlier treated patients with chronic pancreatitis as compared to those who were late referrals. From the same group there was a presentation on Islet autotransplantation outcomes in thirty-six children including children as young as 5 years of age! A rather frightening thought that children of this age would have suffered chronic pancreatitis so severely that they would require a total pancreatectomy. This was another presentation from David Sutherlands group that continues to be the major referral unit in the USA for islet autografts. A ten-year period 1989-2009 was reviewed and the outcomes of this group of children who underwent Total Pancreatectomy and Islet Transplant was reviewed. Insulin use and haemoglobin A1c were obtained from medical records and/or health questionnaires administered to patients/parents. Patients were classified as insulin independent (fasting blood sugar <126 mg/dL and HbA1c  $\leq$ 6.5% without exogenous insulin), minimally insulin dependent (basal analog or rare correction scale alone), or fully insulin dependent (multiple injections/day). Children underwent pancreatectomy at a mean age of 13.6 $\pm$ 4.0 years and received 4,444  $\pm$  3,461 islet equivalents per kilogram body weight (IE/kg). Factors associated with better islet transplant outcomes included younger age at transplant, greater IE/kg transplanted and lack of prior distal pancreatectomy or lateral pancreaticojejunostomy. Notably, none of the 11 patients with a prior distal pancreatectomy or pancreaticojejunostomy had insulin independence. There was a trend towards better outcomes in those with a shorter duration of disease and minimal previous surgery. Prior partial pancreatic resections and surgical drainage procedures conferred a particularly poor prognosis.

## Calendar of Events 2012

**10th Annual Meeting of the Association for  
Cancer Immunotherapy (CIMT):  
Towards Next-Generation Immunotherapy**  
23rd - 25th May 2012, Mainz, Germany  
For more information go to: <http://meeting.cimt.eu/>

**American Transplant Congress**  
2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2012, Boston, USA  
For more information go to:  
<http://2012.atcmeeting.org/>

**TSANZ POST GRADUATE TRAINING COURSE**  
Manning Clark Centre  
ANU, Canberra  
25<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2012  
Website: [www.tsanz.com.au](http://www.tsanz.com.au)

**TSANZ ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING**  
Manning Clark Centre  
ANU, Canberra  
27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> June 2012  
Website: [www.tsanz.com.au](http://www.tsanz.com.au)

**XXIV International Congress of The  
Transplantation Society**  
15th - 20th July 2012, Berlin, Germany  
For more information go to:  
<http://www.transplantation2012.org/>

**Advanced International Training Course in  
Transplant Coordination**  
12th - 16th of November 2012, Barcelona, Spain  
For more information go to: [www.tpm.org](http://www.tpm.org)

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