Australian and New Zealand Society of Blood Transfusion
South East Asia, Pacific Islands Travel Awards

TRAVEL AWARD RECIPIENT REPORT

Location of Meeting: Perth, Western Australia, Australia

Dates of Meeting: 20-23 Oct 2019

Travel Award Recipient Name: **Natasha Philip**

Background of Recipient: I am from Papua New Guinea and I work as a Medical Laboratory Scientist at the Blood Transfusion Service, located at the Port Moresby General Hospital, the country's capital. My contact details are: Phone - (+675) 72791956 or 75407001. You have my email.

Educational activities at the meeting:

1. Oral Presentations:

   I am glad that I was able to attend most of the oral presentations that I was interested in. The very first one which I found quite interesting and especially useful in my line of work is the use of simulation or even any sort of digital content or educational materials to teach our medical trainees the importance of transfusion medicine. This was presented by Katerina Pavenski. The level of knowledge about the science of transfusion medicine is, from my experience, not reached a standard among the trainees where they fully understand what to do when transfusing blood and blood components is not enough. I have realized they would need to be taught in the science of transfusion so at least they may have a fair idea of what to expect or not expect when dealing with a patient needing transfusion. Because the hospital I work at is a training ground for our medical school, incorporating a short course into the medical trainees schedule may help them in the long run as transfusion medicine deals with the whole health and care of patients in every division of any hospital.
   Another set of presentations I enjoyed were from Justin Kreuter. I thoroughly appreciated his talk on "Transfusion Medicine Education in the 21st Century" were the vitality of MOs understanding when to apply certain transfusion skills is a rising need and often overlooked area in medicine. In his other presentation, he talked about the need for platelet compatibility testing and transfusion in regards to the antibody-antigen mechanism and he discussed a patient case as well. It was especially interesting to me be because in my country, we do not bother doing compatibility testing for platelets. Rather, based on the ABO compatibility, we issue out our platelets with complete disregard for any antigens present in the platelet.

There were many more presentations that I enjoyed but these three stood out the most to me.

2. Poster Presentations:

The first poster I noticed was number A032 titled “Blood Administration in the Digital Age”. I was inspired by the content and imagined my country reaching that level of digitalised functionality in the near future. We are currently working on an LIS for the Blood Bank as we currently do not have one in place (however, we do have for the whole lab). I am sure when that is up and running we can be able to discover our own way of administering transfused blood components digitally. Another poster that caught my interest was number A036 titled “Transfusion Reaction Investigation EQA, a six-year review”. In most cases in every Blood Bank laboratory around the world, a transfusion reaction may be documented and followed up with a DAT. But further investigation, which is, creating an antibody elution is not done because of lack of technology. Even some countries with access to technology do not do it because everyone else everywhere are not doing it, based on this study. I have come to realize the importance of a transfusion reaction and whether the reaction is significant or not, there IS a reaction and we have a duty as Medical Scientists to investigate any discrepancies with our blood products on issue to patients. Therefore, we need to follow through all the steps laid out before us to identify the problem. So basically this review was an eye opener for me. The third poster I will mention (and I loved all the posters!) is number A031 titled “A National Transfusion Dataset for Australia: Linking blood use with clinical outcomes”. This poster was especially useful to me because we are currently trying to set up an electronic database for all blood donors and transfused patients at the Port Moresby General Hospital. This is to keep track and assess mortality rates as well as improve transfusion practices and increase the livelihood of our patients by getting them the most compatible blood unit available. Unlike other developed countries, we lack the basic in transfusion medicine like antibody screening machines and screening cells even. It’s hard sometimes but being able to witness what other countries around the world are doing has been an eye opener and I am grateful to be able to share all these newfound knowledge with my colleagues.

3. New Technology / Trade exhibition:

The first equipment I saw was the Ortho Optix stationed by the door leading to the exhibition area. At my institution, we only have the Biovue, whereas the Ortho Optix would definitely be useful to us and a most needed upgrade from what we have. I also noticed the fully automated blood collection chairs for bleeding donors. Those were quite interesting, although I was not able to get much information from the exhibitors. There was also a platelet apheresis machine that I noticed and wished that we had one in my country as currently we only collect whole bloods and run products manually from the whole blood bag. Having the apheresis machine would definitely increase the turn-around time as well as increase our platelet and plasma products because donors would be able to come donate again in less than a month. I picked up some information as well on how to create and run an LIS for the Blood Bank alone which was very useful to me as we are trying to incorporate that system into our institution.

4. Information / knowledge gained from attending the meeting:

   I have learned a lot from the different international as well as local speakers. The role of a medical scientist in blood transfusion as well as the other strands of laboratory and pathology precision is changing and for the better. It still remains important for us to understand the principles of what we do but with that knowledge, we also need to understand how to operate and maintain the diagnostic tools/machines that we use daily. Because a day will come when all we will need to know and fully understand is the machine running all the tests. At my institution and in my country, we still run most of everything manually, and I believe that is good as well because it keeps me aware of the importance of what I do. One important lesson I have learned as medical scientist is to always ensure the continuous practice of quality control and assurance in everything I do. And for whatever tests that I am running or need to run, to always follow through to the end and get a precise result rather than assuming what will or should be. As a scientist, it is my job I have learned, to understand the science of transfusion and realize that it is not only about screening and preparing blood products or running compatibility testing but to also follow through on the clinical outcome of the recipient of the blood/blood product and to investigate transfusion reactions thoroughly where applicable.

5. Overall experience

   It has been quite an experience attending this Blood 2019 Conference as this is my first ever international conference to attend. One thing I value more than every other lesson I have learnt from this experience is the value of Continuous Medical Education and how it can affect and challenge an individual. I have been mentally stimulated all through my duration at the conference and would gladly take up another opportunity to attend such if given me. Because of this conference, I have been motivated to resume some of my research papers that I have not completed due to lack of motivation in my own country. I want to attend the ISBT Conference in Spain 2020 to receive more experience as I have received from this, and thus have started again on my research work. I am glad that attending this conference opened up my mind to the extremes of what the world is doing in the Transfusion Science world. It is always a wonder to find out to that what I am struggling with in my institution, others are as well, so it reinforces the idea that wherever we are in the world, we are not alone and we are all learning together. And as it was stressed numerous times at the conference, “Individually, we are a drop, but together we are the ocean.”

Comments and feedback:

I want to thank ANZSBT for the travel grant and for giving me the opportunity to experience my first ever international conference. I appreciate the time you have taken to help make my travel easier and the effort you have put in to assist me wherever I needed help. This has been the greatest experience for me this year in regards to the vast amount of knowledge I have obtained. And also to meet some of the great minds that I only read about or cite in medical journals, it has been my highest honour. So thank you ANZSBT for making this a wonderful experience.

Information: your reports will be submitted to ANZSBT and ISBT Councils. Extracts may be included on the Societies websites and in electronic newsletters. The feedback from your experience is valued and may assist in continued funding of travel awards.