

American Society for Hematology Annual Meeting 2016

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The Annual Meeting of the American Society of Hematology is the premier event in malignant and non-malignant hematology. This year, over 27.00 scientists from all over the world attended this meeting to discuss the latest developments in the field of hematology and related subjects, with over 3000 abstracts accepted for oral or poster presentation.

One day before the actual start of the meeting, there were dedicated 'Friday Satellite Symposia' on specific research topics. I attended the session on Hematology and Aging, where Emmanuele Passegue presented some recent data on the importance of autophagy for hematopoietic stem cell (HSC) quiescence. Another interesting talk was given by Michael Milsom, who presented data on the importance of inflammation and infection in mouse models of aging, to recapitulate the phenotype of wild animals and humans.

Over the 4 day course of the actual meeting, I attended many oral and poster presentations, and got valuable insights in the work of others, as well as interesting ideas for my own line of research. There were a number abstracts on the bone marrow niche for HSCs, an area that has been studied extensively in recent years, and which is the subject of my own PhD thesis. It was interesting to see that although the concept of a stromal niche for HSCs is now well accepted by the scientific community, there is still much debate about the specifics of these stromal cells, and it is unclear whether there are different subsets of stromal cells to provide different niches. There is thus a need for further characterization of the BM stroma, which is one of the projects I am currently working on.

During the plenary scientific session there was a very inspiring talk by Karin Golan, a postdoc in the lab of Tsvee Lapidot. She showed that HSCs can transfer their mitochondria to stromal cells, to keep their ROS levels low and remain in a quiescent status. This is yet a new role for the bone marrow stroma in supporting HSCs and keeping them quiescent.

On the third day of the meeting I presented my abstract on the impact of interferon gamma on bone marrow mesenchymal stromal cells during one of the poster sessions. There was a lot of interest in my poster, and I had some lively discussions with other PhD students as well as more established scientist. One discussion with a 'hot shot' in the field was particularly fruitful, and resulted in an offer to positively review our work once we submit it for publication.

I would like to thank the Dutch Society for Immunology for giving me the opportunity to visit the ASH Annual Meeting and present my work. It was a valuable experience with considerable impact on both my education and my PhD research.