

Report 8th Autoimmunity Congress Granada 9-13 May 2012

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In the beginning of May 2012, I attended the autoimmunity congress in Granada. This congress had a very broad setup. The immune system in different autoimmune disease was discussed as well as treatment of these diseases. My PhD project is about the immunomodulatory effects of vitamin D on the immune system in patients with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). The major focus of my project is T cells and in particular the regulatory T cells (Tregs), which seemed to be impaired in MS, and IL-17 producing T cells, which are believed to be the most important pathogenic cells. Among all the parallel session, also sessions dedicated to MS, vitamin D, regulatory T cells and Th17 cells were scheduled, covering all the subjects of interest for my project. An interesting keynote lecture on regulatory T cells and the effect of memory Tregs in autoimmune disease was given by Prof. Abbas. Also, the presentation of Prof. Freedman about novel therapies in MS was enlightening.

Next to this, a parallel session on B cells in autoimmune diseases, one of the topics within our department, was scheduled. Especially, the presentation of Prof. Toubi about the suppressive effect of regulatory B cells on dendritic cells and CD4⁺ T cells and the presentation of Prof. Melamed on B cells in aging were very interesting. Moreover, I was also able to extend my knowledge on other immune aspects like toll like receptors and NET formation in autoimmune diseases.

Furthermore, this congress was of particular importance for me to present my data. My two abstracts were both selected as oral presentations. The first oral presentation was titled "Th17 expansion in MS patients in remission is counterbalanced by an expanded CD39 Treg population". The second presentation on the last day was titled "Vitamin D protein levels in MS are similar to healthy controls and are not regulated by vitamin D". These presentations gave me a good opportunity to also discuss my data.

To conclude, the 8th international congress of autoimmunity was an educative congress, giving scientist the opportunity to network and to exchange data in the field of autoimmunity.