

## **GSCN Travel Award: 20th ISSCR Annual Meeting 2022 in San Francisco**

Participant: Kevin Ullmann, Leibniz Laboratories for Biotechnology and Artificial Organs (LEBAO), Hannover Medical School (MHH)

Venue: Moscone West Convention Center, San Francisco, USA

This year's Annual Meeting of the International Society for Stem Cell Research took place from 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> of June. Additionally, a pre-conference workshop on clinical translation was offered on 14<sup>th</sup> of June. It featured around 200 speakers, over 950 posters and approximately 3,000 attendees. The seven plenary sessions as well as multiple concurrent sessions covered several topics related to the stem cell field, such as modelling of disease and development, reprogramming and organoids. I especially enjoyed the talk by Jose Polo on the research of his group regarding the generation of "iBlastoids" and the potential applications. But the most interesting topic, directly related to my own project, was manufacturing and clinical translation.

For this reason, I joined the pre-conference workshop, which, however, did not fully cover my interests on regulatory requirements and challenges related to the cell as a product. Nevertheless, it was interesting to follow the talks on the rapidly progressing field of T cell-based therapies, off-the-shelf cell production and advances in avoiding immune rejection.

Besides the great scientific talks, the industry exhibition is always a highlight on conferences, because everybody likes some free goodies. But on a serious note, I was impressed with the large number of exhibitors at the meeting. I was able to meet with familiar faces, that I have met on the GSCN meetings on countless instances before, but also connected with new people from companies I have never heard before. Also, the poster sessions, organized around the exhibition, resulted in interesting discussions with young, enthusiastic scientists like myself and experienced post-docs and PIs. I really enjoyed the numerous occasions to talk to fellow participants and GSCN members, such as at the Meet-up Hub and the WunderBar Evening, which have been perfectly organized by the GSCN and resulted in new, promising contacts for future approaches.

Most importantly, I had the pleasure of giving a talk on my research in one of the concurrent sessions. The response after the session was overwhelming, as quite a few people were gathering around me to get more insight into my project. I enjoyed answering all the requests ranging from simple method-based questions to the overall perspective of my project in the context of clinical translation. It has been a challenging, but also very fruitful discussion and experience.

A small drawback, considering the high costs to attend the conference, was the lack of food and the scarce possibilities to grab a coffee between the sessions. Especially battling jet lag, I was finding myself in the nearest café getting a overprized coffee too

often. Nevertheless, I really enjoyed the conference, the city and the heart-warming scientific community of the ISSCR.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the GSCN very much for making this experience possible. The opportunity to interact and network with fellow researchers, engaging in constructive discussions and of course to present my own data was an invaluable experience for my project and my career. On that note, the GSCN is doing a great job in supporting young scientists and creating opportunities to mature and learn.

Kevin Ullmann

Hannover, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022