

GSCN Travel Award report

Conference: American Society of Gene and Cell Therapy's (ASGCT) Annual Meeting
Date: 16th – 19th May, 2022
Location: Washington DC (USA)

Ariane Nguyen, M. Sc.

Department of Pediatric Pneumology, Allergology and Neonatology, Hannover Medical School

The 25th American Society of Gene and Cell Therapy's (ASGCT) Annual Meeting was a four-day-meeting where people in the field of gene and cell therapy meet to share their latest scientific research. The content of the conference was diverse as attendees include academic researchers, researchers from biotech-industry, clinicians, regulatory agencies, patient advocates and more. As the conference was so big, several sessions were held in parallel. This was overwhelming and often I could not readily decide which session to join.

It was interesting to see how "trends" are shifting. I was able to get a glimpse of the rise of lipid nanoparticles (LNPs) and the fascinating things that other researchers can already do regarding targeted delivery of LNPs, which might overtake AAVs in the upcoming years. Despite a great focus on AAV and gene therapy in general, there have also been very interesting sessions about ethical concerns or combating misinformation in science, which I liked very much and can only recommend others to visit these kind of sessions as well. There were also several industry-sponsored symposiums that was mostly advertisement of the company's products. One of them however fascinated me, which was Terumo Blood and Cell Technologies' Quantum system for cell expansion. Although it was not relevant for my research, I really enjoyed getting insights into different technologies, their problems and solutions.

One of the most and least anticipated moments for me was, I giving a talk. This was my very first talk at a conference. I was nervous and afraid of the possible questions that I could not enjoy this moment at all. After the talk, I was not satisfied with my performance. However, as this year's ASGCT was held in a hybrid format, afterwards I was able to watch myself give the talk and answer the questions. This was a very valuable experience. I have learned that my perception of how the presentation felt for me was so much different from how it looked from the outside. From this, I could take several points that I should improve in the future and it took some of my fear of presenting.

Overall, it was a great experience for my very first international conference overseas. I learned a lot and was able to enjoy the city after the conference. For this experience, I would like to express my gratitude to the GSCN committee for supporting me with the travel award. Without their financial support, it would have been difficult for me to attend the conference in person.