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World Congress of Psychiatric Genetics 2019, Los Angeles.

This travel award, generously gifted by the Guarantors of Brain, enabled me to attend the World Congress of Psychiatric Genetics in Los Angeles, California from the 26th October until the 31st October. This was the first international conference I have attended, and I came across many researchers whose work I have followed for years. The theme of the conference was personalised medicine in Psychiatry; a highly relevant topic to my PhD project.

The conference was packed full of interesting talks, workshops, lunch meetings and networking events. Often, I found myself torn between talks occurring simultaneously. In particular, I found talks by Kasper Lage on the functional interpretation of genetic data using protein-protein interaction networks very useful. This talk introduced me to new methodology and software, which I will be using later on in my PhD when integrating multi-omic data. Furthermore, as the next step of my PhD project is to look at polygenic risk scores (PRS), the abundance of talks on PRS methodology was invaluable, highlighting key considerations and limitations to consider and ensuring my understanding was up to date.

As well as talks from world-leaders in the field, there were talks about managing your time in academia and how to succeed in the profession. As an early career researcher, this advice was very welcome, and many notes were made!

The highlight of the conference was to have the opportunity to present my work internationally. On one of the days, I presented my poster at the poster networking event. Speaking with other researchers about my work was exciting and informative, and many new ideas and directions have come from discussions and feedback. The poster networking evenings were excellent networking opportunities, and I found them particularly useful in broadening my research perspectives. Furthermore, after discovering we were working on similar topics, I met with a researcher from Australia to discuss ideas and collaborations.

I am extremely grateful and thankful for Guarantors of Brain for the opportunity to attend this conference. It has enriched my research project and I am looking forward to future events.