Young Scientist Program in Busan

Daniel Fox presents his talk, AI-designed protein inhibitors can inhibit growth of pathogenic E. coli.

I was privileged to have been awarded a Young Scientist Program Fellowship and an ASBMB Fellowship to attend FAOBMB2025 and the associated Young Scientist Program (YSP). The YSP was held prior to the conference at Prestige Biopharma Innovative Discovery Center (IDC), a new state-of-the-art biotech hub for new drug discovery and development located in Busan, South Korea.

The YSP was attended by roughly 60 PhD students and ECRs from 16 countries, including South Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam, Japan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Iran, Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, India, New Zealand and Australia. Australia was well represented by Francesca Alves (University of Melbourne), Nicole Fenton (UNSW), Sara Assar Kashani (Macquarie University), Sina Shadfar (Macquarie University), Jing Zhi Anson Tan (University of Queensland), Zeinab Takalloo Bighash (Macquarie University), Yoon Lim (University of South Australia), Lucy Fitschen (University of Wollongong), Ram Prasad Bhusal (Monash University), Yezhou Yu (Griffith University), Pamali Fonseka (La Trobe University), Naveen Vankadari (University of Melbourne) and myself, Daniel Fox. We gave both an oral and poster presentation at the YSP, which I found personally beneficial given we could present our work in more detail during our talks and then have more informal discussions at our posters afterwards, which I think helped with engagement and interest in our work. These informal sessions were also such an invaluable opportunity as it allowed us to expand our networks more, especially with those from other countries or in other disciplines. A highlight was guest lectures from Professor Marcia Haigis (Harvard University) and Professor Kazutoshi Mori (Kyoto University), preeminent experts in the fields of metabolic reprogramming in cancer and the unfolded protein response, respectively. It was also particularly insightful for students and ECRs to hear more about the progression of their careers.

The Australian contingent at the YSP

YSP participants on tour at Songdo Beach.

Prestige Biopharma Innovative Discovery Center.

We were given a behind-the-scenes tour of the IDC, went on a tour of the beautiful Songdo beach region in Busan and were treated to some delicious Korean lunches and a shabu-shabu dinner on the last night, which were great opportunities to get to know the other attendees and share our science. The YSP was a highlight of my career thus far, and I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to both the ASBMB and FAOBMB YSP for the award of the Fellowships that made it possible for me to attend this amazing event. I would also like to thank Associate Professor Sung-Min Ahn, Assistant Professor Kyung-Sun Heo and the rest of the YSP committee for organising such an enriching and stimulating program.

Daniel Fox, Monash University and the University of Melbourne

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