

# The subtle art of conferencing

 [simplyblood.org/2019/08/new-investigators-subtle-art-of.html](https://simplyblood.org/2019/08/new-investigators-subtle-art-of.html)

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The idea of this post came at the end of an interesting and compact session on myeloid biology at [large scientific meeting on hematopoiesis]. Although the immediate thought of the moment was the need for glucose and caffeine, the discussion with ISEH colleagues gradually evolved into how to maximize the benefit of scientific conferences.

## Tips to benefit from large scientific meetings

- Advance planning! Plan in advance which sessions to attend, including booking ticketed sessions, trip and accommodation. Contact in advance people you would like to meet;
- Bring comfortable shoes, a backpack with snacks and drink bottle, cellphone charger; Arrive one day early if possible;
- Reserve some time during the day to preview the posters – coming back in the evening to talk with the presenters.

**Focused scientific meetings**, like the annual meeting of the ISEH, are smaller but lead to the ability to be more collegial and convivial. They represent great opportunities to interact with leaders in hematology within a smaller, time-permissive setting. They rather focus on one or a few areas within a field (i.e. developmental hematopoiesis, a specific type of malignancy). They are the ideal setting to develop collaborations, meet investigators at the

same stage in their career, and gain insight about techniques and career development. The format of smaller, more focused sessions provides the opportunities to ask in-depth questions to presenters and experts in the field. Furthermore, you have an opportunity to present work that may not have gotten an oral presentation in the meeting through events such as the ISEH pre-meeting workshop. If selected as the winner there, this translates into a talk during the meeting! In that regard, the meeting of ISEH was for us a great discovery – it allowed us to join a community of enthusiastic and talented investigators, and the quality of the work presented, by new or established researchers, is outstanding.

### **Tips to benefit from focused scientific meetings**

- Research in advance whether the meeting is appropriate in scope – word of mouth from previous attendees, or browsing the program and list of speakers;
- Take advantage (sign up in advance!) for ticketed sessions that will be helpful for you and allow you to interact and network with your peers. Examples include the pre-meeting workshop, career/technology/junior PI sessions;
- Give preference to scientific meetings with career development sessions or working groups – bring your trainees to help them learn and network!
- Consider becoming a member of the society organizing the meeting in order to stay involved.

Whereas a career in research comes with sacrifices and effort, the ability to travel around the world to meet people equally passionate about their job is a unique perk. As the meeting of ISEH is approaching, we look forward to the exciting science and the meetings with new investigators. We hope to see you there in great numbers.

*Written by Francois Mercier, Heather O'Leary and Cedric Tremblay, members of the New Investigators Committee.*

Scientific meetings come as a tradeoff between time productively spent in the lab and delocalizing in order to get context, information, and inspiration. Meetings are filled with a mixture of excitement and anxiety from learning the advancement of the field, the reward of showcasing hard work, and the opportunity to exchange ideas with leaders in your specific field of research. They are an integral part of a researcher's life. However, selection of which meetings to attend requires prior knowledge of target attendees and the organizers' mission. Regardless of the level of training, one benefits differently from large versus smaller, more focused meetings. In that regard, trusted mentors and colleagues can advise on which meetings are worth the trip. As the annual meeting of the ISEH approaches fast, and you are probably busy packing your bags and putting the final additions to your presentations, we hope these few paragraphs will put you in "meeting mood" and help you get the most out of the ISEH annual meeting.

**Large scientific meetings** (ASH, ASCO, AAI) cover all the aspects of current research in “the field”. They are characterized by their large number of concurrent scientific sessions, each covering a specific topic, and some incorporate a large component of clinical practice. The plenary lectures provide an opportunity to hear from accomplished and inspiring speakers, while the plenary oral presentations highlight very impactful work. The very large poster sessions provide a broad snapshot of the most recent research in several areas. These conferences also attract a large number of industry (scientific, technological and pharmaceutical) vendors. While these meetings are often considered a must, their scale can translate into large walking distances, queues, and inability to ask questions of the oral presenters. Although these meetings provide the opportunity to have a sense of the current ‘hot topics’, you might end up missing the plot, as you can sometimes be running frenetically between different concurrent sessions. Likewise, because of the flurry of activity, it may be difficult to grab the attention of potential collaborators, mentors or reviewers – it may be best to contact the persons you really want to meet in advance.

What are your tips and tricks for making the most out of scientific meetings? Leave us a comment below.

Safe travels and happy “conferencing”!