

British Society for Rheumatology Annual Meeting

By John Thomson, MD, FRCPC

I attended the British Society for Rheumatology (BSR) annual meeting this past 23-25 April, 2013. The meeting took place in Birmingham, England. Birmingham is the second-largest city in the UK with a population of 2,300,000 in the greater metropolitan area. It is located about 140 km northwest of London, in the West Midlands region of England. Historically it is acknowledged to be the first industrial city in the world and the heart of the Industrial Revolution. Today it is an important city of commerce, and home to six different universities. Birmingham is known by the diminutive "Brum" and people from Birmingham are known "Brummies". It is a vibrant city known for its numerous pubs and excellent East Indian restaurants, which I can personally vouch for.

The BSR Annual Meeting took place over three days, at the impressive International Convention Centre in downtown Birmingham; accommodations were abundant, with numerous hotels within easy walking distance of the Centre. Presenters were mostly from the UK, and there were approximately 2,100 attendees, mostly from the UK, Ireland, and continental Europe. A sizable contingent from the Middle East and a smattering of Canadians made up most of the rest of the attendees. Allied Health Professionals were well represented in numbers and in content in the scientific program.

The scientific program included the usual mix of posters, oral abstracts, symposia, and keynote addresses. The calibre of presentations was very high. Highlights included the Heberden Oration by Dr. Paul Emery, in which he reviewed the paradigm shift in rheumatoid arthritis (RA) treatment, which has occurred over the past two decades. Canadian Dr. Kimmie Hyrich, now living and working in Manchester, UK, summarized the findings of the BSR Biologics Registry for RA as regards the risk of malignancy with anti-tumour necrosis factor



Dr. Thomson bumming around Birmingham at the 2013 BSR Meeting.

(TNF) therapy. I attended a myositis oral abstract session that presented invaluable information from centres of excellence in the UK. A session on the emerging role of epigenetics in rheumatic diseases was likewise fascinating.

This meeting was high quality; logistically, it was easy to navigate given its size: somewhat larger than the CRA annual meeting but much smaller than meetings of the European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) and the American College of Rheumatology (ACR). The overall cost of the meeting was quite reasonable, with higher air-fare cost to the UK offset by cheaper accommodation in a relatively smaller city. I would recommend this meeting and plan to return myself.

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