

A CRA Mentee's Experience of the 2016 Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM)

By Pavan Mehat, BSc, MSc

How can I describe the experience of attending my first-ever Canadian Rheumatology Association (CRA) conference and having the invaluable opportunity to present my research? There is no way to do justice with words alone about how transformational and educational this experience has been, but I will do my best.

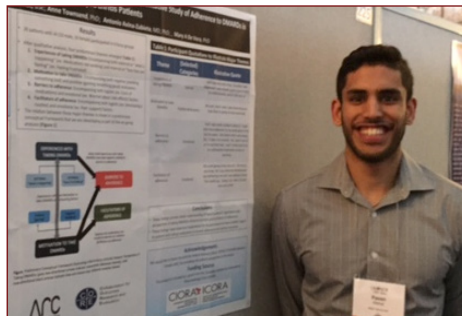
Travelling to Lake Louise for the 2016 CRA Annual Scientific Meeting was a delightful trip. Upon my arrival, I was absolutely astounded by the awe-inspiring beauty that was the backdrop to this meeting. I quickly settled into my room and jetted off to the keynote speech about sleep by Dr. James Maas, otherwise known as “The Sleep Doctor”. I was especially excited regarding this talk because I had read one of his books, “Sleep to Win.” His talk was more entertaining and informative than I could have hoped for. It was a great way to launch all the learning that was going to take place over the next few days.

Following the talk, I was excited to have dinner at the Brewster Barn. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that we were being offered complimentary horse-drawn sleigh rides to and from the barn. I was truly in a winter wonderland.

Since I did not have to present my poster the next day, I attended a plethora of engaging and informative workshops and sessions. The highlight was another talk from Dr. James Maas, *The Things That Go Bump in the Night*.

I was thrilled not only to be exposed to so much cutting-edge research, but to also directly engage with the researchers who had completed this brilliant work. In addition, it was lots of fun to interact with my mentor, Dr. Philip Baer, and to learn more about the great research work he does and how he seems to balance it all.

The next morning, I woke up early to make sure I was ready for the jam-packed day, during which I would present my two posters. However, before I could shift my focus to preparing for my presentations, I was excited about the workshop: *Procreation: Timing is Everything*. Like most things



during this conference, my expectations were exceeded. Dr. Laskin did an incredible job of disseminating a lot of crucial information, while fostering an interactive environment. It gave me a behind-the-scenes look at what my potential future career as a physician might look like.

As the poster session drew closer, I was becoming increasingly nervous.

I blocked off a couple of hours beforehand to ensure that I would be able to review my posters and research to ensure I could provide a cogent presentation.

The time quickly flew by, and I was flattered to see people waiting to learn about my work before I even got the chance to put my poster up. I enjoyed in-depth discussions about my work and the field during my presentation. This was one of the highlights of this trip, as I was able to receive feedback about how to improve my work, while being able to connect with other researchers regarding future collaborations.

This productive day was capped off with an eventful gala dinner. We were all ravenous, as we had not eaten lunch, so the food and desserts were gobbled down as soon as they were served. Afterwards, there was a dance-off, where everyone let loose and lost themselves in the music.

Attending my first-ever CRA conference has not only been extremely beneficial, but also an enjoyable opportunity, during which I have been able to connect with many like-minded peers and mentors. I am especially grateful for being connected with such a great mentor, Dr. Baer, who took the time and initiative to meet up with me multiple times throughout the conference and answered my questions. I will definitely be planning on attending and presenting at this conference next year.

Pavan Mehat, BSc, MSc
MD Candidate, Class of 2020
University of British Columbia, School of Medicine
Vancouver, British Columbia