Available online at www.sciencedirect.com**SciVerse ScienceDirect**journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/cegh **Information and Commentary****A scientific cum cultural experience – An International Medical Students Conference!** **Divya Khattar****King Georges Medical University (KGMU), Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India*

ISCOMS – International Student Congress of (bio)Medical Sciences – is one of the world's largest student conferences held annually in University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG) in the city of Groningen, the Netherlands. Over 500 students selected from more than 55 countries participate to present their research at an international platform. I had the great opportunity of attending the 19th edition of ISCOMS from the 5th to 8th of June 2012 as an active participant in the Poster Session, Neonatology and Pediatrics.

On the very first day a pre-course was conducted with information packed Master Classes on Scientific Writing, Medical Statistics, Critical Reading Class, etc. to better acquaint the students with the research methodologies. This was followed by two days of intense research presentations, namely oral, poster and plenary sessions, keynote lectures, workshops and much more. The evenings were reserved for social programmes at picturesque locations where participants could relax, rejuvenate and interact with fellow researchers and thus broaden their social and scientific network.

The research presentations were divided into multiple disciplines ranging from Neurology, Transplantation to Endocrinology and Cell Biology and had participants across the globe. It was indeed an enriching experience to learn about various research activities happening in different countries and the significant impact undergraduate students could make in contributing to the wealth of research data. Included in the elaborate congress programme were three fascinating keynote lectures including one by Nobel Laureate Dr. Mario Capecchi, Nobel Prize winner in Physiology and Medicine, 2007 for discovering a method for

introducing homologous recombination in mice employing embryonic stem cells. He gave a modest account of his novel research which had led to this breakthrough. Professor Dick Swaab, a Neuroscientist from Amsterdam and Professor Nicholas LaRusso, Director of Innovation Mayo Clinic also kept the audience spell bound with their intellectually stimulating talks. The hands on workshops had a plethora of options to choose from spanning interests from all medical sub fields. Included were Basic Life Support, Laparoscopy, Suturing, Dissection of the human brain, Traumatology & Ethics, etc. These workshops were conducted in the highly specialized Skills Lab of UMCG. The final day of the congress came to an end with a brilliant debate session conducted by Prof. Thera Links on "Healthy Ageing", focus being on optimization of physical, functional, psychological and social ageing. This was followed by the award giving and the closing ceremony. The four-day event wonderfully ended with a post-congress tour to a beautiful Dutch village – Giethoorn.

ISCOMS is a versatile biomedical conference and is a unique learning experience. Meeting medical students from all over the world and understanding various cultures made us more sensitive to the medical issues that have plagiarized different parts of the world and thus would help us to become better global doctors. The ISCOMS experiences surpasses one's expectation of being just a medical conference and memories of this 'once in a lifetime experience' would be cherished for a long time.

The call for abstract submission for ISCOMS is in the month of January.

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