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# Connective Issues:

## BSMB Newsletter



Committee:

Prof Andrew Pitsillides (Chair), Prof Qing-Jun Meng (Secretary),  
Dr James Whiteford (Treasurer), Dr Doug Dyer, Prof Chrissy Hammond,  
Dr Anna Maria Piccinini, Dr Salvatore Santamaria, Prof Jerry Turnbull,  
Dr Angus Wann, Dr David Wilkinson, Mr Anders Jensen (Student rep)

Registered Charity no. 281399

No. 104, January 2024

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## Editorial

Welcome to the 104<sup>th</sup> Connective Issues!

2023 for me has been a year of reunions and reconnections - with family, friends, and the scientific communities from further afield. While the memory of face masks and social distancing seems a distant past, the insatiable longing for human connection leaves a deep imprint. Never before have I appreciated more of the expression “Carpe Diem - seize the day”.

Following the successes of the BSMB Sheffield meeting, the Harden Proteoglycans Conference in Surrey, and the inaugural BSMB Early Career Researchers meeting in Manchester, we will continue with our regular BSMB meetings, with the next one in the beautiful Bristol in April organised by Chrissy Hammond (registration is open). Come and enjoy the amazing matrix research, and do not miss the BSMB Medal Award lecture by Reinhard Fässler. There are plenty of bursaries available, so get in touch with your Bursary Chair, Kasia Pirog.

I would also like to welcome two new BSMB committee members, Angus Wann and David Wilkinson, who are both matrix enthusiasts. And finally, we are currently seeking one post-doc rep on the committee- nominations are open - please join us in running your BSMB!

*Qing-Jun Meng, Honorary Secretary*

## Chair's letter

Dear Fellow Matrix Biologists,

Welcome from me specially to new members. I have also been reflecting on 2023: a year of readjustment, a new normality and – for me anyway – a new BSMB Executive, with Qing Jun and James Whiteford. In case you didn't know, it is these people, together with your excellent Committee members, who make

BSMB function for both ECRs and established (not so early) researchers alike. This inherited set-up is so slick that it can even yield the time to ponder what – apart from applauding the great achievements and hard work of others – the Chair's role really entails... Anyway.

Looking forward: Get on-line now and register for our Spring 2024 meeting, led by Chrissy Hammond: The Dynamic matrix: mechanics, ageing and repair will take place on 9-10 April in Bristol (ECR pre-event). Registration closes 1st April/ Abstract for 16th March, 2024.

Ready yourselves for MBE2024 (24-27 Sept) in Lyon, the acclaimed food capital of France. It has a super speaker list and an excellent Local Organizing Committee. ECR note: applications will soon be requested to enable selection of BSMB's 2024 Dick Heinegård award Nominee. In between, there is The Extracellular Matrix Pharmacology Congress (ECM2024), 17-19 June 2024, Copenhagen, Denmark.

With all this European interaction looming, it is great to share with you the news that BSMB has now signed up to a reciprocal agreement with the German Society for Matrix Biology (DGMB) that enables our members to attend each other's meetings at member-status rates, The expectation is that this will bring fellow EU matrix biologists even closer; more such agreements are being pursued.

Looking back: We owe a debt of gratitude to Jerry Turnbull for a super Autumn meeting/Harden Conference 2023 in lovely Surrey, with the team – John Couchman, Linda Troeberg, Cathy Merry, Jessica Kwok, and Biochemical Society. Compliments, again to our ECR Award winner Chloé Yeung for her John Scott Lecture.

I'd also like to extend my thanks to George Bou-Gharios for reshaping interactions with members and for inspiring our recruitment of new members. Thanks George. Thanks also to IJEP, International Journal of Experimental

Pathology for their continued support – that reminds me I’ve still that review to write.

All the very best for a fabulous 2024.

Andy Pitsillides, BSMB Chair

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## **BSMB News**

### **Mark your diary**

**BSMB Spring 2024 Meeting in Bristol**  
**The Dynamic Matrix**  
**April 9th - 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

**Extracellular Matrix Pharmacology Congress**  
**Copenhagen, Denmark**  
**June 17th-19th, 2024**

**Matrix Biology Europe 2024 Meeting in Lyon**  
**September 24<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

**BSMB Spring 2025 Meeting**  
**The Extracellular Matrix in the Immune**  
**Landscape of Infection**  
**Nottingham, April 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

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### **Welcome to our new committee members:**

#### **Dr. David Wilkinson**

David’s lab examines the proteolytic pathways involved in the turnover of the extracellular matrix, specifically the interaction between serine and metalloproteinases, and how this contributes to collagen destruction. His current research involves serine proteinase inhibitors (serpins) which act as ‘molecular mousetraps’ to control proteolysis in osteoarthritis. After his BSc in Molecular Biology and Biochemistry at Durham University (2009), David completed his PhD at Newcastle University (2014),

supervised by Professor Drew Rowan (Oliver Bird Rheumatism Programme). David established research independence at the University of Liverpool in 2019 and was awarded a Versus Arthritis Career Development Fellowship. David has been a member of the BSMB since 2011 and is very pleased to now join the committee!



#### **Dr. Angus Wann**

Angus studied Physiology at Cardiff before exploring the mechanoregulation of hyaluronan secretion in the synovial joint as a PhD with Professor JR Leveck (SGUL). Angus then took up PDRA positions with Professor Martin Knight at QMUL to begin exploring roles for primary cilia in chondrocytes and inflammation. Subsequently, Angus set up a group at Oxford, Kennedy Institute of Rheumatology, in order to explore how cilia regulate matrix and mechanobiology of the limb and is now, since 2023, Associate Professor of Cell Physiology at the University of Southampton. The group continues to study cellular decision making, as a function of signal integrations in matrix-rich tissues and how cells and the matrix communicate in morphogenesis, health and disease with a focus towards mechanobiology.



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## WELCOME TO NEW BSMB MEMBERS!

### STUDENT MEMBERS

Alex Hartley (Nottingham)  
Daniel Lopez (Keele)  
Charles Gyasi (Manchester)  
Francis Hadrill (Newcastle)  
Jia Wen Lian (Manchester)  
Rabia Sevil (Bristol)  
Roufaida Bouchenafa (Newcastle)  
Anne Stairmand (Liverpool)  
Jesseca Chung  
Yixin Wang (Cardiff)  
Emiliya Seytyagyayeva (Manchester)  
James Parkinson  
Subashan Vadibeler (Oxford)  
Annet Nakkazi (Manchester)  
Alexander Minns (Surrey)  
Clara Whiteley (Manchester)

### FULL MEMBERS

Anthony Weiss (Sydney)  
Nicola Stevenson (Bristol)  
Aikta Sharma (UCL)  
Alessandra Gentile (KCL)

By James Whiteford (Treasurer of BSMB)

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## BSMB Spring Meeting 2024

### The Dynamic Matrix, April 9-10<sup>th</sup>

Co-organised by Prof. Chrissy Hammond, Drs Joanna Moss, Lizzie Lawrence, Nikki Stevenson and Ms Rabia Sevil.

I and the rest of the organizing team are looking forward to welcoming you to cool, creative Bristol in April. Our meeting theme is 'The Dynamic matrix: mechanics, ageing and repair'. It'll be held at The Station, a centrally located venue run by a creative youth charity, with our conference dinner (which is included in the registration price) at the beautiful Mount Without. We've got an amazing line up of invited speakers including: Tonia Vincent,

Farsh Guilak, Joel Boerckel, Niamh Nowlan, Alicia El Haj, Gharda Alsaleh, Joe Swift and Erika Kague. We also have plenty of slots for talks from ECRs chosen from abstracts and for poster presentations. The BSMB medal winner Reinhard Fassler will also present a talk. We'll have an ECR satellite meeting immediately prior to the main meeting with sessions on career coaching, fellowships and alternative scientific careers. We'll have hybrid options to join the meeting, but we hope most of you will be able to join us in person for what we expect to be a stimulating, fun and friendly meeting in Bristol. Registration is already open with an abstract deadline mid-March, so start planning your trip and rustling up an abstract so that you can wow us with your cool science.

Chrissy Hammond

Registration start: Jan. 14, 2024  
Registration end date: April 1, 2024  
Registration late date: April 1, 2024  
Abstract start: Jan. 14, 2024  
Abstract end date: March 16, 2024

Further details and a draft programme with invited speakers:

<https://bsmb.ac.uk/meetings/dynamic-matrix-mechanics-ageing-and-repair/>

Themes in the programme include:

- Repairing the Matrix
- Matrix and Mechanics
- Modelling the Matrix
- The Ageing Matrix

For further information please visit: [bsmb.ac.uk](https://bsmb.ac.uk)

You can also follow us on...

Instagram: @matrixbiologyuk

Twitter: @BSMB1

Facebook: @BritishSocietyForMatrixBiology

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## **Extracellular Matrix Pharmacology Congress Copenhagen, Denmark**

Do not miss out on the Extracellular Matrix Pharmacology Congress (#ECM2024) on June 17-19, 2024, in Copenhagen, Denmark!

ECM2024 will address a wide range of topics within the ECM field, including pharmacology, clinical, and basic science. The aim is to discover new drug targets and bring together ECM experts across different fibro-inflammatory diseases.

Submit your abstract by March 4, 2024, at <https://ecm-congress.org/submission/>  
Register before the early bird deadline on April 15, 2024, at <https://ecm-congress.org/registration/>

Session highlights include:

- Tissue destruction in inflammatory diseases
- ECM as drug targets and biomarkers
- The importance of ECM in cancer
- ECM remodeling in liver and heart diseases
- Dermatology and the genetics of ECM
- Treating the ECM in lung diseases

ECM pharmacology symposia include:

- Targeting fibrosis
- Fibroblasts and tissue destruction
- Exploring anti-inflammatory and anti-fibrotic drugs: Model systems
- ECLIPSE: Understanding and combating COPD
- Elastin and collagens in health, aging, and disease
- Quantifying fibrosis
- ECM remodeling in obesity and metabolic disorders
- Unraveling ECM dynamics: Techniques

Browse the preliminary program:  
<https://ecm-congress.org/scientific-program/>

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## **Matrix Biology Europe 2024 Meeting in Lyon**

September 24 to 27, 2024

It's all in the title: the beautiful city of Lyon will host the MBE 2024, organized under the presidency of the president of the SFBMEC! It is a great pleasure for our company and a wonderful opportunity for our researchers to be able to attend this international conference whose program promises to present major advances and new concepts on the extracellular matrix. So, block the dates of September 24 to 27, 2024 in your calendars now!

<https://mbe2024.sciencesconf.org/>

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## **BSMB Spring Meeting 2025 Nottingham**

BSMB 2025 Spring Meeting – Organised by Dr Anna M. Piccinini, University of Nottingham. As the host of the 2025 Spring BSMB meeting, I'm looking forward to welcoming you to Nottingham. Our meeting theme will be 'The Extracellular Matrix in the Immune Landscape of Infection' and will be held at the University of Nottingham, University Park Campus. This Green Flag awarded campus is beautifully placed within 330 acres of rolling parkland featuring the idyllic grounds of Highfields Park with a boating lake, a public arts centre, a museum and cafés. With a mix of stunning architecture, traditional features and modern facilities, the campus offers state-of-the-art meeting rooms, catering and on-site accommodation. The main meeting will run from lunchtime Monday 14<sup>th</sup> April to mid-afternoon Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> April, with an informal satellite event for ECRs on the morning of Monday (14<sup>th</sup>). The main meeting will have sessions on the extracellular matrix (ECM) and the immune system, ECM-pathogen interactions and the immune response, ECM-immune system crosstalk in lung infections



and hot topics in ECM. Moreover, the prestigious BSMB Fell Muir Lecture will be delivered at this meeting. Excitingly, this event will bring together cell/matrix biologists and immunologists who will enjoy plentiful opportunities for interaction. The participation of distinguished speakers as well as young rising stars in matrix biology, all sharing an enthusiastic interest in the ECM, will catalyse lively discussion and facilitate new collaborations.

The satellite meeting will provide ECRs with the invaluable opportunity to meet previous awardees of the prestigious BSMB Early Career Researcher Award during a Coffee and Chat Career session. It will also offer a 'How to write a layperson summary of your research' workshop and talks on sustainability and inclusive leadership in research.

More information will follow in due course. In the meantime, please mark your calendars!

Anna Piccinini

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## Dick Heinegård European Young Investigator Award – call for nominations

We are pleased to announce our continued support for the Dick Heinegård European Young Investigator Award, which commemorates the work of the matrix biologist Dick Heinegård. The award will be given to the most promising early career post-doctoral matrix biologist from Europe.

Each affiliated European Matrix Biology Society will hold its own competition to select their national nominee for this Award. Nominees will present the abstract orally during the MBE 2024 meeting in Lyon, France (24<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> September).

The outcome of the competition will be decided at the meeting. The Young Investigator Awards Committee of MBE will select the winner of the Award based on the overall quality of the science and the oral

presentation. The award winner will receive a certificate and a cheque (~€2000), funded by the Matrix Societies of The Netherlands, Germany and France, and the BSMB.

Candidates must be current BSMB members, should have no more than 5 years postdoctoral research experience, and a demonstrable track record of excellence in matrix biology research. Candidates should apply by sending their CV, an abstract of the work to be presented at the MBE conference, and a completed MBE/FECTS bursary application form (available on the BSMB webpage) by email to [anna.piccinini@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:anna.piccinini@nottingham.ac.uk) by **April 30<sup>th</sup> 2024**.

## Early Career Researcher Award 2023 Outcome

Dr Chloé Yeung (Institute of Sports Medicine Copenhagen, Denmark) was awarded the Early Career Researcher Award and delivered the 'John Scott Lecture' at the Harden Conference in Surrey (4-7 September 2023). Chloé presented her recent work on a novel mechanism of extracellular matrix homeostasis involving the circadian clock in human tendon, and surely inspired the next generation of ECRs. Many congratulations Chloé for your excellent achievements!



L-R: Chloé Yeung, Andrew Pitsillides (BSMB Chair), John Couchman, Linda Troberg, James Whiteford (BSMB Treasurer).

Anna Piccinini, Chair, ECR Selection Panel

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## In print!

Abstracts from the “British Society for Matrix Biology Spring Meeting 2023: Vascular Inflammation and the Extracellular Matrix” are currently in print online in the International Journal of Experimental Pathology.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/iep.12486>

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## BSMB Committee vacancy

### Join the Committee! Post-doc rep position available...

There is a Post-doc Rep position available on the BSMB Committee. We are looking for someone who is enthusiastic about society work and actively engages with matrix research community and beyond through social media or other approaches. This is ideal for a post-doctoral matrix biologist to represent voices of post-docs in the matrix community, to help formulate BSMB policies, and to gain committee experience in a prestigious and highly supportive research society. Any nominations (self-nomination is welcome), together with the written consent of the proposed nominee should be forwarded to the Honorary Secretary, Prof Qing-Jun Meng ([qing-jun.meng@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:qing-jun.meng@manchester.ac.uk)).

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## BSMB Bursaries

### BSMB Bursaries and Couchman Travel Awards are available.

Current BSMB members are encouraged to apply for bursaries to present your matrix related findings in conferences.

1) Applications are invited for Reporter Bursaries to attend the BSMB Spring meeting (in person) to be held in Bristol in April 2024. Up to £250 can be claimed. For more details, please follow the link here.

2) The Couchman Travel Award, kindly sponsored by Professor John Couchman is open to applications. Each Travel Award will cover up to £150 for a BSMB meeting (~10 awards per year), or up to £300 for a European matrix-related meeting (~2 awards per year, including the biannual MBE meetings). Please follow the link here.

3) For bursaries to attend the "Other meetings" category: These bursaries remain open to the early career researchers (ie PhD students or up to 6 years post-doc). The awards are for up to £150 for UK meetings and £400 for meetings elsewhere in the world. Please follow the link here.

4) For bursaries to attend the " Matrix Biology Europe (MBE) or American Society for Matrix Biology (ASMB) meetings" category: These bursaries remain open and fund up to £500 for FECTS/MBE meetings and £600 for ASMB meetings. Please follow the link here.

Applications should be sent to Dr. Katarzyna Pirog ([katarzyna.pirog@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:katarzyna.pirog@newcastle.ac.uk)), Chair of the BSMB bursary committee. Please check your eligibility before applying.

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## Meeting Reports

### Meeting report of the 12th International Proteoglycan Conference/89th Harden Conference, Surrey (By Jerry Turnbull)

The 89th Harden conference “Proteoglycans – Master Matrix Regulators” was held on Sept 4-7 at a country house hotel in the Surrey hills. The conference, jointly run by the Biochemical Society and the British Society of Matrix Biology, followed in the footsteps of two previous successful Harden conferences on proteoglycans in 2001 and 2009 and also served as the 12th International Proteoglycan conference. Over 130 international conferees attended, around half of which were able to present their latest research orally, along with ~ 50 posters.



The quality of the science was excellent, covering cutting edge research on a broad range of topics including technology advances, biochemical and cellular mechanisms, molecular basis of disease and development of new therapeutic strategies (for applications as diverse as diabetes, cancer, inflammation, neurodegeneration and infectious diseases). Some seminal

advances were described including single molecule sequencing of oligosaccharides, role of heparan sulfates in growth factor gradients and the first successful phase III trial of a modified heparin drug. Other notable research advances were presented on circadian rhythms of matrix molecule metabolism, stem cell regulation and biosynthesis of glycosaminoglycans. There was a strong focus on young scientists presenting short talks, and on poster sessions, and the standards of both were judged by experts in the field as uniformly high. An excellent talk for the BSMB ECR award – The John Scott Lecture - was given in the Matrix Biology by Chloé Yeung from Copenhagen, entitled “Circadian-regulated matrix homeostasis in human tendon”.

The conference was blessed with superb September weather, allowing conferees to enjoy the outdoors during session breaks and take advantage of walks in the nearby hills. Social interactions at the conference were extensive and, in particular, promoted networking between early career researchers and more senior investigators. Additionally, there were two early career scientist workshops on career development and entrepreneurship which were well attended and generated very positive feedback. In addition, feedback reviews on the conference from attendees were highly positive.



L to R: James Hooper, Valentine Esperance Aho, Catarina Marques, Sylvain Vallet, Catriona Haberland

This BSMB/Biochem Society conference was valuable in highlighting that the proteoglycan



field is at an exciting stage with new tools and technologies available to tackle outstanding research questions, and is increasingly relevant to many disease processes, with translational advances coming to the forefront.

**89th Harden Conference meeting report by  
bursary awardees Megan Priestley  
(University of Manchester) and Jingyi Feng  
(Cardiff University)**

From Seoul, to Tokyo, to Surrey! The international Harden's conference marked its 89th meeting this year in sunny Horseley, bringing matrix researchers from all across the globe to the beautiful De Vere estate. This year, the conference was a collaboration between the Biochemical Society and the BSMB and was titled 'Matrix master regulators: Proteoglycans'. The conference spanned 4 days of glorious weather and incredible science, covering topics ranging from biosynthesis to proteoglycan's roles in neuroscience, inflammation, ageing and disease.

The week kicked off with a keynote lecture from Professor Jeffrey Esko on seemingly the most popular molecule of the conference: heparan sulfate. Jeff gave us an insightful look into how vastly the content and composition of heparan sulfate can vary in humans across age, gender, and race and how this may impact our understanding of the role of the molecule in numerous systems. Professor Frances Platt gave the Biochemical Society Award Lecture for 2023 and received this year's Thudichum medal. Her lecture focussed on sphingolipid lysosomal storage diseases and how study of these rare diseases is unearthing surprising links with more common diseases. A particularly riveting short talk was given by Dr Rebecca Miller who unveiled her new single molecule imaging technique which allows detailed imaging of notoriously evasive proteoglycan molecules.

This new technology is allowing her lab to create a 'glycosaminoglycan library' which has the potential to enormously advance the proteoglycan field.

Day 2 started with the sessions on chemical and structural biology of GAGs and matrix biology, with researchers talking about structural and transition characteristics of GAGs, and the regulation and impacts from GAGs on matrix. Before lunch break, the morning sessions was rounded up with the John Scott Lecture from Chloé Yeung who was presented with the Early Career Researcher 2023 Award to recognize her achievements in the research of circadian-regulated matrix homeostasis in human tendon. Following a young scientist group session led by Prof. Glenn Prestwich and Prof. Paul DeAngelis to share tips about research translation, the afternoon and evening talks were mainly about the roles and contribution of proteoglycans (PGs) in pathology, ranging from cancer, aging, and chronic diseases. Posters and refreshments fulfilled the day at last.

On the day 3, symposia topics included biosynthesis and remodelling of GAGs/PGs whereby more views about pathogenesis on molecular level were given to us, as well as the advances in regenerative medicine and biomaterials with PGs applying to the limb stem cells differentiation, neuronal regeneration, etc. Another young scientist group session was hosted by Prof. Cathy Merry, Dr. Brooke Farrugia and Dr. Salvatore Santamaria to share their experience on the academic path, their advice for early career researchers, and encouragement to young scientists to break the limitations and comfortable zone. Afternoon session was themed with 'PGs in inflammation', about which presenters shared findings on the role of PGs in inflammasome activation and autophagy, pathological related function in renal ischemia reperfusion injury, inflammation bowel disease and skin

inflammation, etc. After the afternoon session about PGs in neuroscience reporting the responsibilities of PGs in nervous system formation physiology, and repair, everyone cheerfully enjoyed good scientific discussion over the conference dinner.

To close the week, the final keynote lecture was from Professor Andrea Vortkamp on her intriguing work on heparan sulfate in chondrocytes and how altered HS expression can activate compensatory mechanisms and increase ECM synthesis.

The meeting drew to a close with remarks on the incredibly high standard of presentations from PhD students and PDRAs, with prizes given out for the best short talks and posters. Excitement is already building for the next Harden’s meeting to be held in Melbourne, Australia in 2025!



L to R: Jerry Turnbull with Mia Zol-Hanlon, who received one of the BSMB sponsored Short-talk Awards.

## Meeting report of the BSMB ECR Event Manchester, June 29, 2023 (By Douglas Dyer)

In the summer of 2023, the BSMB held a new conference, “Replenishing the matrix”, aimed specifically at building networks between early career researchers from around the UK. The meeting was chaired by Dr Douglas Dyer and hosted by the Wellcome Centre for Cell-

Matrix research at the University of Manchester and was attended by 60 people.



A large range of biology topics, all related to the extracellular matrix field, were presented from development of the brain to regulation of the tumor immune response and allergy. The fascinating plenary talk was given by Dr Chloé Yeung from Copenhagen on the role of the ECM and timing in tendon injury and repair. Prizes were also awarded for a fantastic range of talks and posters by PhD students and postdocs, Dr Priyanka Hirani, Dr Rebecca Dodd and Catalina Moreno Rodriquez (see picture below).



Given the focus of this meeting on strengthening connections amongst ECRs there was a well-attended networking session, with lots of pizza, that produced new collaborations and excellent discussions around ECM biology and its’ future directions and priorities. Feedback from the meeting was very positive with a number of people suggesting to run the event again in a different location and stating that the meeting

had been productive and opened their eyes to other areas of biology with an ECM focus that they may not have previously considered.



All who attended were in agreement that ECM researched in the UK is in a healthy state and is being nicely replenished! Look out for a similar meeting in the near future!

We missed you if you were not there and we hope to see you in the Spring meeting in Bristol 2024.

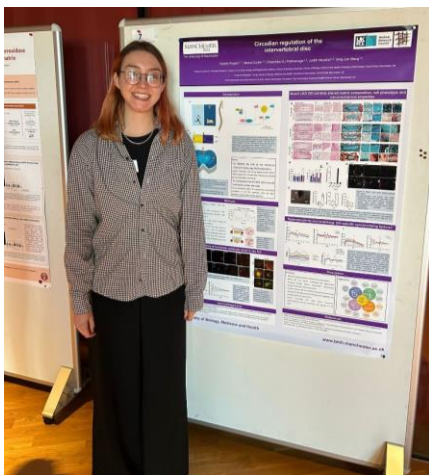
**Meeting report of the Danish  
Society for Matrix Biology  
Annual Meeting  
30th-31st October 2023  
Copenhagen, Denmark  
By bursary awardee Natalie Rogers  
(University of Manchester)**

The conference talks on the Monday began with a fascinating account by Professor Anthony Day of the pleiotropic roles of TSG-6 in matrix organization, and the therapeutic potential of TSG-6 in various disease models including reducing fibrosis in restenosis and reducing cartilage degradation, oedema and bone erosion in rheumatoid arthritis. This was

followed by a talk by Neel Nissen from Nordic Bioscience on development of diagnostics for a range of diseases (cancer, COPD and liver cirrhosis) by targeting tissue-specific matrix proteins. Kevin Baker from the University of Copenhagen presented on how different fibroblast cell populations deposit specific matrices and how this matrix affects the phenotype of macrophages, with implications for understanding how the tumour microenvironment may affect macrophage behaviour.

Day 2 included talks from Dr. Joan Chang on the 'sacrificial pool' of collagen which appears to be under circadian regulation due to rhythmicity of key components of the secretory pathway. Dr Michal Dudek from University of Manchester gave a talk on his research identifying mechanical compression and hyperosmolarity as clock resetting time cue for the cartilage and IVD circadian clock and how these drive skeletal rhythms out of sync with the master clock regulator, the SCN in the brain. He also included results showing the potential signalling pathway implicated. Luke Gamon from the University of Copenhagen gave a really good talk discussing the importance of spatial proteomics in investigating atherosclerotic plaques, emphasising how the cells and matrix in different regions are unique and as such we are losing information if we analyse the whole plaque as a single entity. Overall, the conference provided a comprehensive review of the field of matrix biology including studies of exciting new ECM-associated molecules and cell types of interest, as well as the novel techniques including ECM scaffolds, tissue decellularization, cell-derived matrices, fluorescence imaging techniques and spatial proteomics. Finally, there was a clear focus on how we can use this understanding of matrix biology to treat diseases associated with matrix changes, which is most chronic diseases.

As part of this meeting, I also attended the DSMB Matrix PhD training course, which was really useful and good fun. All the lecturers were kind and open to discussions regarding their research and our own projects. The course included a comprehensive and engaging overview of matrix biology, including the history of ECM study and fundamental information on components of the matrix and their formation. This was followed by numerous talks by experts investigating matrix disruption and disease, for example, cancer, connective tissue disorders, immune system disorders, osteoarthritis, and tendinopathies. The course also discussed leading research techniques in matrix biology including methods of tissue decellularization, matrix scaffolds, novel techniques in mass spectrometry, microscopy and methods of measuring tissue mechanics. This gave us a thorough understanding on how these may be useful in our own research. We also gave 8-minute individual talks on the background of our PhD projects; the group was really encouraging, and it was easy to ask questions. Overall, a really worthwhile course... the coffee and sandwiches were good too!



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## News from the International Society for Matrix Biology

### Travel Funding

ISMB provides international travel grants (on average 500 €) for young scientists (graduate students or postdocs up to 5 years after PhD, with extensions for maternity leave, military service, etc) to allow them to attend major meetings in matrix biology anywhere in the world. While priority will be given to meetings directly supported by ISMB (including Matrix Biology Europe, the American Society for Matrix Biology and the Pan Pacific Connective Tissue Societies Symposium), applications are accepted for any meeting, provided that the scope of the meeting agrees with the aims of the Society.

Candidates should be members of the ISMB, and a graduate student or postdoc. up to 5 years after PhD, with extensions for maternity leave, military service, etc.

Grants will be paid out in the form of reimbursement to grant awardees, after reception of proof of participation. To this aim, users must send a receipt of the expenses (e.g., meeting subscription fees, etc.) within 3 months from the end of the meeting they received support for. To apply for a travel grant, please fill the the form available on ISMB web site (<https://www.ismb.org/copy-of-travel-grants> [ismb.org]) and append a single pdf file containing:

- (1) a letter giving information about the meeting, the amount requested and a detailed justification for support
- (2) the abstract of your poster/short talk
- (3) your curriculum vitae and list of publications.

Please apply several months in advance of the meeting, before one of the following deadlines: January 1, April 1, July 1, October 1.

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## Current BSMB Committee

Chair, Prof. Andrew Pitsillides  
Royal Veterinary College  
[apitsillides@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:apitsillides@rvc.ac.uk)

Honorary Secretary, Prof. Qing-Jun Meng  
University of Manchester  
[qing-jun.meng@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:qing-jun.meng@manchester.ac.uk)

Honorary Treasurer, Dr. James Whiteford  
QMUL, London  
[j.whiteford@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:j.whiteford@qmul.ac.uk)

### Elected Members:

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## **SEE YOU IN BRISTOL IN APRIL!**

**BSMB Spring Meeting – Bristol  
April 9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> 2024.**

**The Dynamic matrix:  
Ageing, repair and mechanics**

Join us in cool, creative Bristol for a friendly and stimulating meeting – with an ECR pre-event on morning of 9<sup>th</sup>.

Stellar line up of invited speakers: Farsh Guilak, Alicia El Haj, Tonia Vincent, Paul Martin, Erika Kague, Joel Boerckel, Niamh Nowlan, Ghada Alsaleh and Joe Swift.

Lots of slots for ECRs to present. Bursaries available for ECRs.



**Conference banquet (included in registration)  
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- LIVER DISEASES
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- CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES
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<https://mbe2024.sciencesconf.org>

### Invited Speakers

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Paolo Bonaldo (Italy)  
Bert Callewaert (Belgium)  
Joan Chang (United Kingdom)  
Collin Ewald (Switzerland)  
Martin Humphries (United Kingdom)  
Thomas Kammertoens (Germany)  
Rachel Lennon (United Kingdom)  
Catherine Moali (France)  
Johanna Myllyharju (Finland)  
Alexandra Naba (USA)  
Ellen van Obberghen-Schilling (France)  
Francesco Pasqualini (Italy)  
Yuval Rinkevitch (Germany)  
José Carlos Rodriguez Carota  
Lydia Sorokin (Germany)  
Brian Stramer (United Kingdom)  
Lieven Thorrez (Belgium)  
Daniel Wehner (Germany)  
Chloé Yeung (Denmark)  
.../...more to come

### Local Organizing Committee

Florence Ruggiero, Chair  
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Carine Le Goff  
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