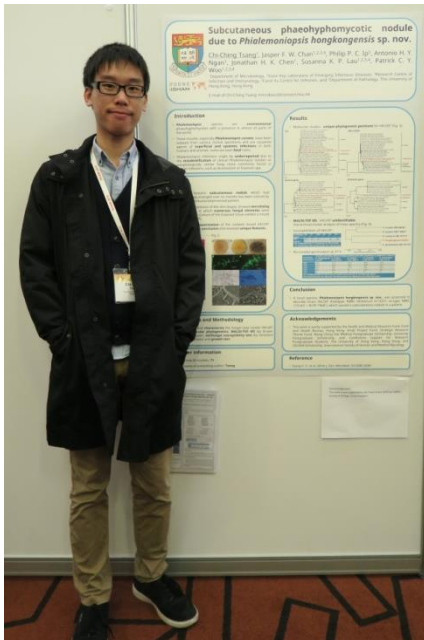


Chi-Ching Tsang
19th Congress of the International Society of Human & Animal Mycology, Australia

The 19th Congress of the International Society for Human and Animal Mycology (ISHAM) was held on 3rd – 8th May 2015 in Melbourne, Australia. The triennial ISHAM congress is the largest-scale international meeting in the field of medical mycology, allowing clinical scientists and fundamental mycologists to meet and to discuss and exchange ideas on the current trends and development of the subject.

This year, the ISHAM congress attracted more than 650 delegates from 48 countries across the globe. In addition to the main conference programme, the event also featured a series of pre-congress workshops, arranged as the Mycological Master Class VII, as well as the Young ISHAM day, which aimed to provide educational talks to young mycologists, to offer researchers in their early careers the opportunity to share their research results, and to facilitate networking amongst young scientists.

It is with great pleasure and sincere thanks that I was selected for the Society of Biology 2015 Travel Grant (Affiliate/AMSB) to support my attendance at this year's ISHAM congress. I am also very grateful to Young ISHAM and my University which provided me additional funding for my travel.



During the six day event, I first attended two workshops on the use of matrix-assisted laser desorption/ionisation time-of-flight mass spectrometry for fungal identification in clinical laboratories and antifungal susceptibility test. These two workshops summarised current and brought up future development of the two methodologies in the study of clinical fungi and provided me new insights on these two topics.

The second day of the event was the Young ISHAM day. I was granted the opportunity to give a seven minute talk to share my research results on a novel fungal species. It was isolated in a case of subcutaneous phaeohyphomycotic nodule and was proposed the name *Phialemoniopsis hongkongensis*. It was my first overseas oral presentation in front of other young scientists as well as well-established, eminent mycologists from all over the world. During the main congress I delivered a poster presentation. This was a different experience to giving an oral presentation and I took pleasure in interacting with the audience, receiving comments from fellow researchers and responding to their questions. I also felt delighted when some foreign colleagues expressed to me their interests in my work.

In addition, one other thing I benefited from the event was the opportunity of networking. It was a really nice chance to get to know more fellow scientists from other countries and I am also pleased to have met several renowned mycologists from Thailand. I hope there will be collaboration opportunities between our laboratories too.

Apart from the scientific activities, this conference trip also hugely enriched my personal life experience. This was my first time trip to Australia and the intense and diverse cultural atmosphere in Melbourne was impressive. I particularly like the well-preserved colonial architecture in this city, such as the Queen Victoria Market and Flinders Street Station. I enjoyed the relaxing and fairly tranquil environment of this place too, which was quite different from my hometown, which is vibrant and busy. Outside of Melbourne city, I also took a trip to the Great Ocean Road and visited the Great Otway National Park. The towering eucalyptus trees in the ancient rainforest inside the park were really astonishing and a rich diversity of fungi, especially basidiomycetes.

I am grateful to the Society for the travel grant which allowed me to take part in this event which undoubtedly helped pave the way for my scientific career. I would definitely encourage other fellow researchers to apply for this grant. With the support of the Society younger scientists who otherwise do not have sufficient funding could gain a lot by participating in overseas scientific activities.