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The East Coast PARP 2006 Meeting was one of the most academically enriching experiences I have had during graduate school. The relatively small size of the meeting, with about 60 participants, was the perfect setting to interact with the experts on the specific area of my research studies. With 22 oral presentations (including mine) and 18 posters, attending this meeting provided me both with loads of new ideas and excellent feedback about my work.

A conference that is so subject-specific has the advantage of not having the need to make long introductions about your research and, therefore, allows for longer time to be dedicated to the presentation of results. This was particularly educational for me, as I was not only exposed to information that I could potentially use, but I also learned about other possible experimental methods that I could implement in my own research. In addition, coming across with similar results as those that I thought to be controversial in my own experiments was a great relieve as it validates the way I've been performing my work.

While learning about other people's work was very beneficial for me to have a better perspective of where to target my research project, giving an oral presentation for the first time was really an outstanding experience for me. During the formal time of the presentation, "Cellular NAD status as a regulator of skin photodamage", there were only five minutes dedicated for questions from the audience; however, during the breaks many people approached me to ask further questions regarding my results. I was pleased with all the positive feedback I received for my presentation. Many graduate students and professors shared with me interesting ideas and experiments on how to continue my research, some of which I plan to address in the near future.

This was also a great opportunity to learn about the research being performed in each of the laboratories of the people related to the area. Normally, we learn about the work that these people have performed through the scientific publications, but this is all work from the past. Here, most of the graduate students shared their plans of research for the future, which allowed for possible collaborations between laboratories. In my particular case, I have performed microarray analysis of my study models. This type of data analysis is labor intensive, time consuming and requires extended validation through RT-PCR. I came across a student from Cornell University that will be doing the same study in a related model. We agreed to compare results in the future as doing this does not cause a conflict of interest for any of the parts, but will be beneficial to both.

In summary, attending this meeting was a great opportunity for me to gain valuable experience and direction for my academic career. Thank you for providing me with the funding to attend this conference.