

**Siobhan Gardiner**

**International Symposium of Phytochemicals in Medicine & Food, China**

I was very grateful to receive an MRSB Early Career Researcher grant in April 2015, which supported my attendance to the International Symposium on Phytochemicals in Medicine & Food (ISPMF2015, Shanghai – CHINA). The event took place between 26<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> June 2015 at Shanghai Normal University, and was my first opportunity to present at an international conference.



ISPMF is an international platform for the exchange of the latest research in plant bio-active compounds for food-flavour and human health. I presented my new reproducible, qualitative and quantitative method for profiling constituent volatile flavour compounds in vanilla extracts, in conjunction with thermal-desorption gas chromatograph time-of-flight mass spectrometry (TD-GC-ToF MS).

The conference was a joint venture between the Phytochemical Society of Europe and the Phytochemical Society of Asia. Nearly 300 delegates were registered from over 48 countries; with 120 posters on display, 12 keynote speakers and 75 lectures. My presentation took place during the session on 'Isolation and structure elucidation of natural products' on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June, and I was delighted to be awarded Best Lecture of the conference with a grant from the Phytochemical Society of Europe.

During the conference there were many interesting lectures on tea phytochemicals for nutraceutical applications and human well-being - as well as ginseng, rice varieties and essential oils from spices. Many of the lectures were quite strongly tied to clinical studies and animal models (particularly to cancer research). There were also strong and informative lectures on chromatography, coupled with functional bioassay studies.



The conference organisers put on a great programme for us, which included visiting Xitang in Zhejiang Province (an ancient water town), martial arts demonstrations, traditional Chinese dances, music, and an evening cruise on the Huangpu River in front of the iconic Shanghai skyline.

I am now looking forward to building collaborations with phytochemists and plant scientists in Asia, and hope to carry out a placement working alongside activities in Shanghai.

Through these platforms of presenting my work, I am learning how to effectively communicate my research through both presentations and paper-craft – which is proving fundamental to my development as an early-career scientist.