



## TELEGRAFT LIVE!

**Wish you were here! Today's agenda was just as jam-packed as yesterday's.**

- Plenary Session 3 continued the first day's momentum, followed by two Plenary Breakout Sessions consisting entirely of Oral Abstracts related to Cancer Immunotherapy. It was a great way to get a well-rounded snapshot of a complicated field in a short time. **Mark Lowdell**, Co-Chair of the Organizing Committee, said, "Plenary Session 3 presented intriguing insights into the possibility of achieving tumour antigen epitope spreading through combining TAA-reactive T cells with CAR technology and the continued importance of alloimmunity in the armamentarium of tumour immunotherapy. Today's breakout sessions again gave opportunities to young scientists to present some excellent data across immunotherapy and regenerative medicine."
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- Special Events and hard-working Plenary Sessions balanced each other during another whirlwind day of science and networking.
    - The new "Meet the Experts – Speed Networking Event" was hosted by the North America Regional Committee. Non-members met/interacted with the leadership of ISCT over a drink. Every ten minutes the delegates were encouraged to switch partners, to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to chat with the leader of their choice.
    - The first Early Stage Professionals (ESP) Session, *Advanced Strategic Innovations for Cell and Gene Therapies*, covered a range of topics by talented ESPs. **Ben Weil** (UCL, UK) described how they are developing the largest gene-modified MSC bank and some of the challenges they have had to overcome to ensure the same bank can be used for phase 1, 2, and beyond. **Avery Posey** (UPenn, US) added a twist to the CAR-T story for solid tumors, highlighting his work on targeting truncated carbohydrates and tweaking CD28 signaling to increase persistence of the CAR-T. The third speaker, **Thorsten Friedel** (GSK, UK), educated
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the ESPs on the various methods of surface engineering used on viruses to improve gene delivery. The session wonderfully highlighted some of the up-and-coming talent present in ISCT. **Emily Hopewell** commented that “One of the best aspects of the ESP sessions is the mix of ESPs and established professionals in the audience.”

- W.O.M.E.N. in Advanced Therapies Networking Event impressed one participant so much that there may soon be another chapter of the program in North America. **Sowmya Viswanathan** is investigating bringing W.O.M.E.N. to Canada. **Nancy Collins** also enjoyed the event, noting that Mentoring, Education and Networking are the key areas for this group, in line with ISCT’s goals.



- Another impression from **Miguel Forte**, “I would like to highlight two moments in the program today in line with the ISCT effort to represent all aspects of the product translation path at the annual meeting program, the Hot Topic session on Biotech Financing in 2017 and the Plenary session on *Industrialisation with the Patient in Mind*. These sessions attest to the increased interest on focus on ensuring that cell therapy products are being developed with a clear sense of the value being delivered to all stakeholders and in particular to patients’ needs.”
- The ISCT Presidential Task Force (PTF) Patient Association Outreach Activities session was a wee bit more exciting than the average session. The projector





overheated during **Gerhard Bauer's** presentation so we were treated to and surprised by a dramatic monologue of the role of patient advocates, with Gerhard explaining that there is a long history of medical mistakes. Later, Gerhard revealed that he has a second career, in the Department of Cinema and Digital Media at UC Davis, teaching "The History of the Motion Pictures" which explains his flair for the dramatic. **Massimo Dominici, Kim Nichols, Aaron Levine, and Dan Weiss** shared an overview of the PTF on UCT, regulatory challenges facing unproven cell therapy, ethical considerations surrounding development, and the results of the recent survey regarding PTF activities. There was an immediate line-up at the microphone and lots of good discussion ensued. The presentations will be posted on the ISCT website, so be sure to check it out.

- **Janet Macpherson** mentioned that it was "So great to have so many regulators participating in our annual meeting. The feedback session from the IPRF working group on biodistribution studies for gene therapy products was excellent with **Björn Carlsson** alerting us to the dangers of conducting 'comfort studies' - those studies that we predict will be negative but are flawed in design."
- Finally, the Gala on the Thames, a dinner cruise on The Silver Sturgeon, celebrated the Society and provided a real chance to relax and catch up with colleagues and friends, while viewing the stunning cityscape of London at night, with twinkling skyscrapers, the Millennium Eye and Big Ben as our backdrop. The Gala started out as a humble picnic and continues to amaze us every year.

## Cheers and see you tomorrow!

### *Photo Credits:*

**Brian Poole and Dan Weiss** under the Tower Bridge

Elizabeth Tower (Big Ben), by **John Wheler**, ISCT Head Office

Tower Bridge, by **Kim Shand**, Malachite Management

The Shard, by **Queenie Jang**, ISCT Head Office

