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## Postgrads Matter

### ■ Questionnaire

In 2003 the SGM had nearly 900 Postgraduate Student Members. As microbiologists of the future you are very important to the Society and one of the recurring topics at Council's annual Strategy Group meetings is how best to meet your needs. Two Council members, Hilary Lappin-Scott and Dave Kelly, have been assigned special responsibility for postgraduate members, and they recently got together with Education Group Convener Jo Verran to produce a questionnaire to find out what you want from the SGM and what you think of the existing membership benefits. This was circulated to all Student Members in October and the responses have been analysed. They will be reported in detail in a future Gradline. Meanwhile, if you want to learn more about the findings you should attend the following event...

### ■ Successfully surviving your PhD

If you are attending the SGM meeting at Edinburgh University, don't miss this session being held by the Education and Training Group on Thursday 10 April. Aimed at improving the lot of postgraduate microbiology students, information on general PG topics will be supplemented by more subject-specific material from SGM members. There will also be an open forum.

Speakers include D. Green of the UK Council for Graduate Education on the 'changing postgraduate experience', T. Brown of the National Postgraduate Committee on 'rights, wrongs and expectations', Liz Sockett (former SGM Education Officer) on 'managing your supervisor', Jo Verran on 'PhD and what else?' which will explore the outcome of the questionnaire described above and finally Council member Hilary Lappin-Scott will explain about the 'SGM and you'.

This morning session will conclude with a free 'Pub Lunch' at the nearby Students' Union which will be available ONLY to people attending the talks! Tickets will be distributed at the event.

See enclosed programme booklet for full details.

### ■ Careers 'R' Us goes on...

#### Life Science Careers 2002

November 2002 saw External Relations Office staff turning out on cold Saturday mornings to participate in the Life Science Careers Conferences held in Glasgow, Sheffield and at King's College London. The conferences, now in their 15th year, followed the successful format of a range of presentations interspersed with generous breaks, where delegates were able to mingle with speakers and talk to exhibitors. In response to feedback from previous events, more coverage was given to careers outside the lab with topics including science communication and publishing, patent law and sales and marketing. The more traditional career pathways in industry, clinical science, teaching and academic research were also described. Around 20 different organizations, including

companies and professional bodies, had stands at each conference. Delegates who submitted their CVs beforehand were able to have them reviewed by experts on the day.

The conferences were attended by a total of 680 undergraduate and postgraduate students from all branches of the biosciences and it was good to meet SGM Postgraduate Student Members who came to visit our stand during the refreshment breaks.

Our thanks are offered to staff of the Physiological Society whose turn it was to undertake much of the administrative work ably assisted by staff from the Biochemical Society, British Pharmacological Society and Society for Experimental Biology.

### ■ New careers website

[www.biocareers.org.uk](http://www.biocareers.org.uk)

The SGM careers resources and information service has recently undergone a major makeover and a new website separate from [www.sgm.ac.uk](http://www.sgm.ac.uk) has been launched. It focuses on training and opportunities for microbiologists at all stages of their careers. You will find answers to your questions about:

- Postdoctoral research
- Finding work outside the laboratory
- Successful job hunting
- Careers events

You can order our careers publications, including booklets and factsheets, online.

The image shows the cover of a booklet titled "Bioscience@Work Your career in microbiology". On the left, there is a vertical navigation menu with buttons for "Microbiology Careers", "School Leavers", "Graduates", "Researchers", "Other Biosciences", "Careers Resources", and "Links". The main content area includes a list of topics: "Introducing microbes", "The scope of microbiology", "Job areas" (with sub-points: "Medical microbiology", "Microbes mean business", "Food & drink", "The great outdoors", "Out of the laboratory"), and "Course & Qualifications" (with sub-points: "Choosing a degree or HND course", "Graduate qualifications", "Technical training and qualifications"). Below the text, there are two small images: one of a yellow spherical microorganism and another of various colorful microbes.

We want to develop the site further and would welcome suggestions for other topics that you would like to see included.

We plan to include a set of careers profiles on the website and it would be great to feature some PhD students and postdocs to inspire students at the beginning of their microbiology careers. If you are willing to be interviewed and profiled on the website, please contact Jane Westwell at SGM HQ ([j.westwell@sgm.ac.uk](mailto:j.westwell@sgm.ac.uk)). There will be CD gift vouchers for those who appear on the website.

Individual enquiries are still welcome and receive a personal reply. Simply email the External Relations Office on [careers@sgm.ac.uk](mailto:careers@sgm.ac.uk)

■ Jane Westwell, Careers Administrator

## SGM Microbiology Communication Prize

- **1st Prize...** £500
- **2nd Prize...** £200
- **3rd Prize...** £100

- *Are you a postgrad or postdoc who has gained their PhD in the last two years?*
- *Are you presenting a poster or offered paper at an SGM meeting?*

If so, you can enter your presentation for a communication prize competition which takes place at the SGM autumn meeting. Finalists in the competition make short oral presentations and the judges award cash prizes to the three best entries. All finalists receive a year's free Society membership. Their expenses for travel and one night's overnight accommodation at the meeting are met.

Selection for a place in the finals is through the sessions of the special interest Groups or at an Irish Branch meeting, so you must submit your abstract for consideration by the appropriate Convener. Details of Group scientific remits are available on the SGM website ([www.sgm.ac.uk](http://www.sgm.ac.uk)). Groups do not always hold sessions at every meeting and so you also need to check that the Group relevant to your work is going to be there. Information on future meetings programmes is available in *Microbiology Today* or on the website.

You must be a Society member, a postgraduate student or a postdoc within 2 years of gaining your PhD. In the case of a multi-author paper you must have contributed 60% or more of the experimental work and been primarily responsible for the preparation and presentation of the poster/paper.

*To enter all you need to do is tick the box on the abstracts submission form on the SGM website.*

You will subsequently be informed when the judging session for the first round of the competition will be taking place.

For further information contact the Meetings Administrator ([meetings@sgm.ac.uk](mailto:meetings@sgm.ac.uk)).

## ASM Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS)

■ *SGM Council sent along PhD student Saimon Malhotra to check out this annual event.*

November 2002 saw the gathering of the ABRCMS in New Orleans, Louisiana. This year was deemed special since it marked the 40th anniversary of the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) and the 30th anniversary of the Minority Access to Research Careers (MARC) and Minority Biomedical Research (MBRS) programmes. These bodies encourage students to pursue advanced training in the biomedical sciences and provide professional scientific support with resources for facilitating students' success. In return, students are given the opportunity to participate and present their achievements at a national conference, like this one.

I attended this conference to learn more about it by engaging with the students and the organizers. Like all other conferences I've attended, this one was enjoyable, informative and content-rich. It comprised scientific sessions, professional development workshops, student oral and poster presentations, as well as numerous exhibits. The programme also featured outstanding speakers, including two Nobel laureates.

However, this conference was designed for the minority groups in the United States, which are currently underrepresented across all aspects of the scientific field. The term 'minorities' as defined here, encompasses women and groups belonging to different ethnic backgrounds. The above-mentioned bodies are aware of the changing demographics in the country and are responding by running programmes designed to increase the number of minorities in biomedical research. These minority students, some of whom initially have no desire to pursue a career in science and others who want to but don't know how, are encouraged to undertake a period of research at local colleges. The rationale being that such programmes help to tap the talent of members within the targeted minority groups and make them realize how rewarding and satisfying a career in science could be.

The conference not only provides these students with the opportunity to present their work, but allows them to take advantage of the many educational opportunities available to help each student reach their full scientific potential. With this given opportunity in drawing underrepresented students into science to sample scientific research, the goals of the organizing bodies will only be fulfilled if participating students decide to stay on and further their development in science through education. In my opinion, this is a plausible scheme in introducing science to the underrepresented groups of a large population and may help to resolve the current minority issue. However, for a long-term solution, I believe investment of time, money and effort should be directed into schools to promote and encourage a career in science to minority groups who are currently underrepresented. By targeting these groups at an early age we may see the end of the need of such a conference.

■ **Saimon Malhotra**  
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## 'Visions of Science' – seeking imagery in medicine

Can you take photographs that bring your work to life and help explain microbiology to a wider audience? If so, the 2003 Novartis and *The Daily Telegraph* 'Visions of Science Photographic Awards' are looking for entries that capture science in creative, surprising or thought-provoking ways.

The awards have some exciting new categories this year with a first prize of £1,000 and second prize of £400 in each one.

■ **Action** for images that capture a scientific process or event in the natural world.

■ **Close-up** for images that reveal the world in a way not seen with the naked eye.

■ **People** for images that communicate the impact of science, medicine and technology on people's lives.

■ **Concepts** for images that demonstrate or explain a scientific concept.

■ **Art** for images that illustrate the beauty of science.

To celebrate the DNA Anniversary, the Medical Research Council is sponsoring a special DNA Award looking for the best image about DNA, the science of genetics, or its impact on people's lives, with a £500 prize. The *British Medical Journal* is sponsoring a special Healthcare Award, with a £500 prize, looking for the best image that shows the impact of science and medicine on people's lives.

NESTA, the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts, is sponsoring The Novartis and *The Daily Telegraph* 'Visions of Science Photographic Awards'.

You have until **30 May** to send in your entries. If you want more information, visit the website [www.visions-of-science.co.uk](http://www.visions-of-science.co.uk) for an entry form, or telephone 0207 613 5577.

Winners will be notified in August. The Award ceremony will be held at The Royal Society in September.