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Dear President,

I was most honoured and grateful to receive the Van Leeuwenhoek Award from the European Society for Microcirculation in 2004. The award enabled me to visit a number of key laboratories in Switzerland and Germany. Unfortunately I was unable to visit one of the laboratories I had planned in my application due to the birth of my second child co-inciding with my travel plans! However, I used the award for a trip that took me to four of the key laboratories in my research fields, and of which have enabled me to establish successful collaborations.

In January 2005, I travelled to the University of Leiden to establish a collaboration with Professor Adriana Gittenberger de Groot on vascular development, and in particular the role of the alternative splice variant of VEGF, VEGF_{165b} in human development. In October 2005 I travelled to Switzerland for a week to visit the laboratories of Dr Melody Swartz in Lausanne, Dr Jeanette Wood's laboratory in Basel, and across the border to Germany to visit Dr Helmut Augustin's laboratory in Freiburg.

These two trips have been extraordinarily successful. The visit has resulted in two publications (one out, one in review) so far, and strong research discussions, and collaborations between myself and the laboratories at Novartis and Lausanne. Professor Augustin's laboratory works on vascular remodelling and the roles of ephrins, angiopoietins and other molecules. Our discussions led to a collaboration where a tumour lymphatic specific marker was identified in melanomas (Am J Pathol 2006 Mar;168(3):1045-53). Furthermore, our collaborations have continued in response to the discussions we have had. Perhaps more importantly, since giving my talk on VEGF_{165b} in Freiburg I have since been invited to talk at major international angiogenesis meetings on this subject – a breakthrough for me, in that it has proved difficult to gain a platform in these meetings for this subject.

My visit to Dr Swartz laboratory in Lausanne, resulted in a significant strengthening of our research relationship and enabled me to be able to incorporate Dr Swartz most recent ideas on autologous chemotaxis into grant applications, one of which has now been supported enabling our lymphatic research to continue.

My visit to Professor Gittenberger De Groot's laboratory has resulted in an identification of a role for VEGF_{165b} in human development. The first of the manuscripts to come out of this collaboration is currently under consideration at the American Journal of Physiology.

I also had a very valuable meeting with Novartis, which I am hoping will develop into a collaboration over the next few months.

The award therefore enabled me to embed by research within a European microcirculation framework. The money was used to pay for flights (approximately £350), other travel expenses (approx £200, including rail travel from Bristol, and around Switzerland), accommodation (approx £400, over 8 days travelling around Switzerland and Germany, and £200 in Holland) and subsistence costs during the visits (£350).

Once again , I would like to thank the Society for their support. I am sure that this has enhanced my research career, supported my academic career, and helped to cement relationships within the European Microcirculatory Society, and I am hoping, raising the profile of the Society in the eyes of Dr Swartz, Dr Wood, Professor Gittenberger de Groot and Professor Augustin,.

Yours sincerely

Dave Bates