

2019 Nigel Clarke Bursary Report – Dr Lauren Akesson

It is with pleasure that I write this short report after receiving the 2019 Nigel Clarke Bursary to support my attendance and presentation at national and international genetics conferences. I was very privileged to attend the 2019 European Society for Human Genetics conference in Göteborg, Sweden, along with the British Clinical Genomics Summer Scientific Meeting in Birmingham, UK. I presented a clinical case of two newborn infants who were diagnosed with the mitochondrial disorder Pearson syndrome after rapid mtDNA sequencing as an adjunct to rapid exome sequencing, as part of the Australian Genomics Acute Care Flagship. I had the opportunity to network with an international audience of individuals who were interested in the findings presented in my poster, increasing awareness of our research and clinical diagnostic services and sparking discussion of what is possible when there is a vision to improve patient care. Furthermore, I was able to participate in the conference and attend many groundbreaking presentations, contributing to and growing from the experience. A few months later, I attended the Human Genetics Society of Australasia Annual Scientific Meeting in Wellington, New Zealand, and presented this poster as well as a further two posters describing additional aspects of genomic diagnosis. This allowed me to interact with local genetics professionals including the Australasian Association of Clinical Geneticists. As a result of my attendance at conferences, I brought back to Australia an international perspective and new ideas. The bursary has given me opportunities to incorporate new strategic research into projects and collaborations as well as guide my career planning. It reignited my focus to make a difference to both the patient in front of me, and to many patients through improvements in diagnostic testing as I plan to continue to dual train as a clinical geneticist and genomic pathologist. As a future leader in the industry looking to opportunities to support future trainees, I appreciate the support provided by this Bursary and I am grateful for the ongoing support to trainees during the formative years of our professional development.