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**2020 AALAS recipient, AAALAC International Fellowship Award**

My fellowship began like no other prior fellow.....Rewind to the end of 2019 when I received the call from the Chair of the AAALAC International Fellowship selection committee informing me that I had been chosen as the US 2020 Fellow. I was so excited; I think I pinched myself daily to ask if this was really happening! Fast forward to March 2020, the week I was supposed to leave for England. There was complete fear and uncertainty in the world – COVID-19 hit us and everything was about to change. Within 5 days of getting on the plane to begin my fellowship, the decision was collectively made to postpone. I was devastated to say the least but the AAALAC International staff came through and assured me they would make it right. (Thank you, Dr. Bayne!)

March 2022- my fellowship finally begins! I took the red-eye out of Newark, NJ and arrived in London, Heathrow early the next morning. I experienced a minor hiccup in connecting with my driver since my flight had been delayed but I finally arrived at my hotel in London early afternoon. I went for a walk, hopped the train and located The London Eye (see below). This amazing 443' wheel is located on the South Bank of the River Thames and attracts more than 3 million tourists per year!



Day 1 was a simple walk down the street to the Francis Crick Institute. The building is an engineering marvel and quite stunning inside and out. Noteworthy, the institute was officially opened by Queen Elizabeth II in November 2016 and was fully functional in the early 2017. Upon meeting my host for the day, I learned many different aspects of conducting biomedical research in the UK versus the US. The NACWO (Named Animal Care and Welfare Officer) is the responsible individual that oversees husbandry and the care and welfare of the research animals. The UK has some of the strictest animal research regulations in the world and is guided by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act of 1986. Research on great apes (orangutans, gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos) was banned in 1986 and utilizing animals for cosmetics or their ingredients was banned in 1998. Additionally, three licenses must be granted by the government's Home Office before any animal research can take place. They are as follows:

Personal license- for the individual doing the experiment

Project license- for each experiment

Establishment license- - for the institution undertaking the experiment

Licenses are granted for medical, veterinary, scientific and environmental research.



Entry to Francis Crick Institute

The real fun began later that evening when I had to begin traveling around the country via the “Tube” or subway as we refer to it in the US. I was on a train to Grateley when I found the taxi listed in my itinerary was no longer available. Thankfully, a great friend and colleague messaged me and assisted in locating an operational taxi service and I continued on to Amesbury, Wiltshire where I checked in at an incredibly quaint guest house for the evening. The customer service there was amazing! (Fairlawn Guest House, if you ever find yourself requiring lodging in the area)

Day 3 began by taking a taxi to Porton Down to visit the Centre for Macaques and being dropped off at the wrong building. Have no fear, my amazing host came to the rescue and picked me up and escorted me to the highly secured (military) check-in point. Upon check-in they had me listed as British citizenship which could have been a huge problem, but I was able to be cleared with the assistance of my host. 😊

The Centre for Macaques was so impressive. All of the animals lived in very large runs with exposure to natural sunlight so the monkeys could experience dusk and dawn. The facility had a large dedicated kitchen where staff created yummy enrichment treats for the animals. They also had a mini “shop” where staff were continuously creating and building physical enrichment perches and tunnels for the animals to enjoy. The Centre serves as an important breeding facility and provides animals for the research facilities throughout England.

Onward to the next couple of days spent at the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology and the University of Cambridge, Department of Physiology, Neuroscience and Development. I participated in discussions about team building and staff development and received a tour of their facilities. I was quite impressed by their aging primate studies and how people-oriented these amazing primates were upon my arrival to the study area. I was also amazed with the University of Cambridge zebra fish facility with state-of-

the-art automated units from Tecniplast. The facility housed thousands of fish and had several robots feeding the fish.

During my stay in Cambridge, I took in the sites of many historic buildings and also had dinner one evening with my new friends at The Eagle. This famous pub is where Francis Crick interrupted patrons' lunch on February 28, 1953 to announce that he and James Watson had "discovered the secret of life." That "secret" was their proposal for the structure of DNA. It was a great evening hearing about local history and I had to take a photo of the famous plaque placed for Watson and Crick. (see below)



Wrapping up the end of week 1 was my visit with staff at the Institute of Cancer Research. This facility was most impressive with its rodent radiotherapy and imaging center. I was fortunate enough to get to view a demonstration of this equipment while data were being recorded in real-time.

At the end of my first week, I chose to spend my weekend in London and met a friend for lunch, took in more sites such as Buckingham Palace, did some shopping at Covent Garden and also visited the famous Tower Bridge. I also took a tour of the HMS Belfast. (see pictures below)



Week two began with a visit to Understanding Animal Research, a non-profit organization that explains why animals are used in medical and scientific research. This visit was one of the highlights of my trip, as this is an area I am passionate about in the US and goes hand-in-hand with outreach and educating the public on the importance of biomedical research.

After a quick stop at the world-famous Kings College London, I was off for a 3-hour train ride north to Harrogate for the IAT (Institute of Animal Technology) Congress. This meeting was much like our National AALAS meeting, and opened with an amazing vendor welcoming night and trivia. During the Congress, I gave a brief presentation about my 30-year career in the field of Laboratory Animal Science. The Congress was filled with engaging scientific presentations and poster exhibits.

Last stop was LabCorp, Harrogate. Since I am a current employee, it was the perfect way to end my incredible two weeks in the UK! It was great to see a sister site and tour the facility and meet colleagues that I had only previously “met” via Microsoft Teams meetings.

In closing, I would like to say no words can come close to expressing my sincere gratitude for being awarded this fellowship. One US fellow I spoke to shortly before leaving for my trip mentioned it was “life-changing.” I wholeheartedly agree. I would go back and do it again if I could but instead I am paying it forward and using my experience to engage colleagues and encourage them to apply for this once in a lifetime opportunity. I would also like to sincerely thank AAALAC International, Datasand Group, MRC, NIH, and Priority One Services for sponsoring this amazing fellowship, all of my new friends in the UK that served as a host and tour guide, the selection committee, and my nominating colleagues and friends for believing in me!



The Ball at Harrogate closing the IAT Congress