

AAALAC International Fellowship Award 2016

In June 2016 I received the call to inform me that I had won the prestigious AAALAC International Fellowship Award which nearly brought tears to my eyes. Winning the award meant a lot to me especially when you look at the past winners who have played a significant role in the improvements animal welfare, education, amongst many more areas. Everyone at the AAALAC International office was amazing, organising the whole trip for me.

On Saturday 22nd October I set off from London Heathrow to Washington Dulles on my adventure. After an 8hr flight I arrived and went through security to be greeted by a driver to take me to my hotel. The hotel was located in Bethesda which was a beautiful location close to the center of Washington, D.C. After checking into the hotel I decided to relax after a long flight.

Sunday 23rd October – this was a free day which allowed me to explore Maryland and Washington, D.C. I decided to take the metro into Washington, D.C., so I could see the famous buildings (White House, Washington Monument, Washington Mall and the surroundings). After enjoying lunch I decided to head back to the hotel but on the way I noticed a station “Woodley Park-Zoo,” the fact my last name is Woodley meant I couldn’t resist the temptation of getting off and exploring. This was a great place with nice independent shops, restaurants and a zoo. The zoo was great and I expect it was named after me ;o) on arrival back at my hotel I went for dinner and then decided to have an early night as there was a busy week ahead.



Monday 24th October – I was taken to the University of Maryland for my first tour of a U.S. animal facility. Initially, I was given an overview of the facility and then taken through the various units where I met very friendly technicians who gave me a great insight into the workings of an animal research facility in the U.S. I was then collected and taken to Virginia for dinner and a night at another separate hotel. We arrived at Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Janelia Research Campus James; I was at a loss for words to describe this site containing beautiful buildings, a lake, on-site hotel and restaurant. Having

met some of the senior team at Janelia we sat down for a nice meal and drink. After this the staff headed to the hotel and went to bed.

Tuesday 25th October – I woke up and went for breakfast with the Director of Janelia and was then taken for my tour around the facility. This was an impressive facility unlike I have ever seen before and the staff were incredibly passionate about animal welfare, polite and happy to answer any of my questions. During my tour I also met researchers who were carrying out innovative research and to a high standard.

Wednesday 26th October – This day was allocated to visit the National Institutes of Health which is made up of federal buildings with high levels of security. Once I had gone through security I met with the administrative staff for the care and use of animals in research. Having discussed various aspects of U.S. law I was slowly gaining a better understanding of how research can be conducted and the works put into place to ensure it is done at the highest standards.

After the meeting I headed off to the zebrafish facility and the size was simply amazing, 86,000 ltrs, spanning over a vast area with a mammoth plant area.

I was taken to a little garden area where I was shown a plaque which was in place as a dedication to the animals used in research which was beautiful.

I then went to the staff room where I was greeted by the staff of building 49 and gave a brief presentation about myself and career to date, answering many questions on U.K. research, living in the U.K. and BREXIT (this was a common question especially with potential US election looming). After lunch I was given a presentation and then headed off to the facility. The facility was a multi-species facility including some species you are unlikely to see in the U.K. I was surprised by the size, spanning over five floors with 120 staff.

Thursday 27th October - I was taken to National Eye Institute to meet a fellow Brit to discuss the behavioural research his groups carry out and to see experiments in action. This was really interesting to me after working in the area of ophthalmology research for over 13 years.

Then we headed off to lunch and to meet everyone at the AAALAC office. Firstly, I had to thank them for all their hard work organising my trip and then gave them an update on my experiences so far. I was given a presentation where the staff discussed various aspects of AAALAC accreditation which I believe is becoming ever more widely used globally.

I was given my AAALAC goodie bag and then headed off to view another facility which was part of the National Institutes of Health. On arrival I met vets, facility managers and unit staff where we discussed various aspects of animal research in the U.K. and U.S. We then went for a tour around a large primate quarantine facility which had both indoor and outdoor facilities.

Friday 28th October – Consisted of a tour to MedImmune where I was greeted by one of the 2016 U.S. winners of the AAALAC International Fellowship Award. This was a fantastic opportunity to discuss our trips and have a tour of the facility. I had the afternoon free so decided to explore a little more of Washington, D.C.

Saturday 29th October – I was collected by a chauffeur and taken to the airport for my flight to Charlotte. On arrival I headed off to my hotel and then meet up with some Brits for lunch and a tour of the NASCAR museum.

Sunday 30th October - This was the first day of the AALAS meeting and I collected my ID and had a tour. I was told the conference would have over 3000 people and based on the size of the venue I wasn't surprised.

Wednesday 2nd November – International Luncheon (award day)! We sat down for lunch and following this awards/prizes were given out for various contributions to animal welfare/research. It came to my award and I went up to give my speech. I have to say with roughly 300 people in the room from all around the world I got a little nervous. I was given a beautiful globe which I was so proud to receive and then sat down to talk with people from around the world.

Throughout my time at AALAS I attended great lectures, posters and the trade stands where I met some amazing people and learned so much.

This has been a once-in-a-lifetime experience and a great opportunity to share information on the use and care of animals in research. It was fascinating to learn more about the use of animals in research within U.S., see all the care that goes into animal welfare and passion from the people involved.

It has been such an honour receiving this award and I would encourage everyone who is eligible to apply to do so. I would also like to say a special thank you to everyone who accommodated me in the U.S. especially Rob Weichbrod and staff at the AAALAC office which made my trip stress free. Special thank you to the sponsors of this trip (Datesand and Priority One).

I would also like to thank all my mentors along the way who have developed me as an animal technologist, providing me with great support and advice along the way, plus all my colleagues at King's College London for their support, especially during my wonderful AAALAC Fellowship.



Stephen Woodley MIAT, RAnTech, UK AAALAC Fellowship award winner 2016