

## My experience at the BTS Annual Congress, 2022

The BTS annual conference of 2022 was the first in-person conference I have been able to attend as part of my PhD studies, and as a result I had few notions of what to expect. I was incredibly fortunate to apply for and be granted the BTS Pre-Doctoral Bursary, enabling me to not only attend the show but to present my research as a poster presentation. I had little idea what to expect and what the experience would be like and found myself feeling extremely daunted on the train ride to Newcastle.

Once the conference was underway however, I found myself having a great time- there were so many interesting people that I spoke to, and so many fascinating talks I listened to that it's hard to choose a favourite, but one of the highlights for me was attending the workshop discussion on the use of animals in toxicology. Especially as someone early in their career and facing the reality of using animals as part of my research project, it is a subject I have been faced with throughout my postgraduate studies, and to hear and see people from the full range of industry and academia discuss such a sensitive topic at length was excellent.

As part of my bursary I was able to present my work as poster, and as part of this I met a great number of people who stopped to chat about my work, ask questions and even offer suggestions of experiments I could incorporate into my research. Everybody that I met was lovely and I found myself put at ease when speaking to professionals who had many years' experience on me. The insight and experience I gained will absolutely set me up for success at any future conferences I attend to present my work.

On the social side of the event, the NEST "pub quiz" style session was a lot of fun and gave me chance to connect with people who were at a similar point in their career as myself. I look forward to attending more events (social and otherwise) that are arranged by the NEST committee and would like to take the opportunity to offer a huge thank you to Nevine and her crew for being so friendly and welcoming to everyone.

I have stayed in contact with a few of the people I met at the conference and cannot wait until next year, where I hope to present again as I near the end of my PhD.

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