

AIMMS 2018 Annual Meeting: our scientific diversity in the spotlight

On Thursday 12 April 2018, the 8th Annual Meeting of the Amsterdam Institute for Molecules, Medicines and Systems (AIMMS) took place. Over 120 staff members, post-docs, PhD, Master's and Bachelor's students were provided with a diverse programme, highlighting the broad range of science done within AIMMS.

The 8th AIMMS Annual Meeting started with a word from **Bas Teusink**, since January 2018 the new director of AIMMS. He (re-)introduced the AIMMS team and showed the very high scores AIMMS has received from the evaluation committee: the maximum score for quality and viability and a very good score on (societal) relevance. Of course, there is always room for improvement and Bas showed the recommendations of the evaluation panel and the actions that the AIMMS management team is undertaking to further improve AIMMS.



AIMMS Keynote lecture

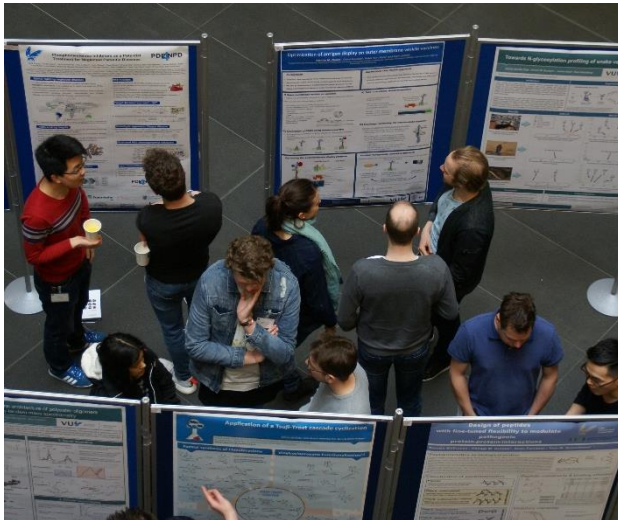
Then the science kicked in with the first keynote lecture of the day by **Paul Jennings**, the new Professor in molecular toxicology and the successor of Nico Vermeulen. He talked about the potential of human induced Pluripotent Stem Cells by showing how they can be used, together with established and novel techniques, to determine both tissue-specific and donor-specific effects of all kinds of chemical substances.

AIMMS PI session

The keynote was followed by principle investigators (PIs) from AIMMS that showcased the broadness of the high-quality science that is done within AIMMS. **Edith Houben** presented the work of her group on understanding the function of the ESX-1 secretion system of the tuberculosis bacterium. Next, **Jessica Legradi** showed the power of the non-animal zebrafish model she is using in her research. For instance to determine whether molecules in the environment are neurotoxic. The third speaker was **Célia Fonseca Guerra**, who showed the audience how advanced computational approaches can give insight into how bonding mechanisms affect molecular recognition. As final speaker in this session, **Peter van Hoorn** explained how the science of AIMMS can and should find its way to various stakeholders in industry and regulatory bodies. This nicely linked back to the need for more (societal) engagement as indicated by the evaluation panel.

Poster competition

During lunch, AIMMS researchers ranging from senior scientists to students, showed their work in a poster session. In total, 50 posters were presented, which led to many interesting discussions and a broad overview of the many topics that are studied within AIMMS. All posters were also visited by a jury committee, selecting the best poster and its presenter.



PhD competition

After lunch, seven AIMMS PhD students presented their work in short oral contributions of only 10 minutes. For the presenters this was a good practice in being short and broad, a skill that is useful for many conferences. Afterwards, the audience could vote for their favourite talk via an electronic voting procedure made possible by Maikel Wijtmans and Danny Scholten.

Industry Keynote lecture

The scientific part of the day was concluded by a keynote from Industry. **Arthur Oubrie**, Chief Scientific Officer of Lead Pharma from Oss (the Netherlands), talked about focus of Lead Pharma on the discovery of novel small molecule therapeutics in the areas of immunology and oncology. In particular, he presented their ongoing research into inverse agonists of $ERR\alpha$ that are able to hit refractory tumours at many levels.

Award winners

The day was closed by an award ceremony hosted by Guus Schreiber, the dean of the Faculty of Science. Two prizes were to be earned: a prize for the best poster and one for the best oral contribution by a PhD student. The winner of the poster prize was selected by a jury of AIMMS PIs. Two posters really stood out according to the jury, one from a Master student and the other one from a senior researcher. The jury decided to grant the poster-prize to the Master student. So while the poster by Johan van Heerden got an honourable mention, Master student **Coleen Neumann** won the poster prize for her poster on activity assessment of snake venoms. According to the jury, her poster told a great story throughout, was very clear and explicitly showed that her research was performed within AIMMS.

For the best oral presentation, the votes from the audience showed a very clear winner, **Timo de Groof**, for his talk on ‘nanobodies targeting and modulating the oncogenic viral GPCR US28’. Both winners got a certificate and 250 euros to spend on something science-related.



The day ended in a more informal way, with bubbling wine to celebrate the excellent scores from the evaluation committee and tasty food in the form of an Indonesian buffet.

The AIMMS management team would like to thank all attendees for their presence and contributions, and looks forward to meeting all of you again at next year’s Annual Meeting.