

One Recipient's Experience with the AAALAC International Technician Fellowship

by Carolyn Malinowski

The Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International (AAALAC International) Technician Fellowship is an annual award granted by Priority One Services, Inc. (POS) and in cooperation with the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS), the Institute of Animal Technology (IAT), the Medical Research Counsel (MRC), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Each year the award is given to one IAT Registered (RAnTech) technologist and one AALAS Registered (RALAT, RLAT, RLATG, or CMAR) technician who have made (or have the potential to make) significant contributions to the field of laboratory animal care and use. The Fellowship includes an expenses paid trip to either the United Kingdom (UK) or the United States (US) where recipients visit laboratory animal facilities and then attend either the annual IAT Congress or AALAS Meeting. Nomination packets are accepted annually and must include the following: a nomination letter which may be a self-nomination, a CV, no more than 3 letters of support and a written statement from the candidate stating why s/he should receive the award.

This year after my second nomination application packet, I was fortunate enough to be selected as the AALAS Registered Technician who received the Fellowship. I was incredibly thrilled to be presented with the opportunity to travel to the UK, visit animal facilities there and attend the 60th Annual IAT Congress in Aviemore, Scotland. After working with AAALAC International and the IAT to coordinate the trip, book flights and make other arrangements, I headed off to the UK, arriving in London a few days early to allow for some sightseeing. It had been arranged for me to visit six facilities in London, Salisbury, Cambridge and Sandwich. I was also able to meet with the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs), an organization dedicated to the application of the 3Rs in research, and discuss their mission, goals and projects. Everywhere I went, I was welcomed with unbelievable warmth. Everyone went out of their way to make sure that I enjoyed my visit and maximized my time in the UK. I found it incredibly fascinating to see the laboratory animal facilities and learn about the regulations in another country. I learned that although we achieve goals differently and have different standards to meet, the laboratory animal care and use programs were fundamentally the same. I witnessed the same passion for their jobs, love of animals, pride in what they do and commitment to animal welfare that I have seen in the US. The few things that left the biggest impression on me were how everyone in the UK used the 3Rs as part of their everyday language, the provision of enrichment specifically for larger animals, and nontraditional methods of housing for larger species (i.e., troupe housing for macaques, pens on the floor for rabbits). I also found the efforts of the NC3Rs to promote the use of the 3Rs in biomedical research to be remarkable and wish that we had similar efforts going on here in the US. All in all, the AAALAC Technician Fellowship provided me with the opportunity to get a glimpse of the global laboratory animal community and expand my way of thinking. For this I will be forever grateful and look forward to sharing what I learned from this experience with others here in the States.

I would like to send my heartfelt appreciation and thanks to everyone who helped make this visit possible including POS, AAALAC International, the IAT, AALAS and the staff at the following institutions

who welcomed me so graciously: the MRC at Mill Hill, the Center for Macaques at Porton Down, the MRC at Cambridge, Pfizer at Sandwich, the Imperial College and the NC3Rs. The impact that all of you made and the experiences that you provided have already impacted my career and my way of thinking. I hope to encourage eligible individuals to take a chance and apply for the AAALAC International Technician Fellowship. It was a life changing experience and I strongly suggest you visit the AAALAC International website at <http://www.aaalac.org/about/fellowship.cfm> for more information.