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NVVI Travel grant report 2019

Protein and Antibody Engineering Summit (PEGS)

Lisbon, Portugal

November 19-22 2019

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Receiving the Travel Grant from the NVVI made it possible to attend the Protein and Antibody Engineering Summit (PEGS) in Lisbon, Portugal. PEGS is an annual conference where scientists from both academia and companies, working in the field of antibodies, come together. This conference covers all aspects of protein and antibody engineering. As my PhD project at Sanquin Research is focused on therapeutic antibodies, this was a perfect meeting to gain more knowledge on engineering of antibodies and their use as therapeutics.

The main program of the PEGS conference was divided in so called streams. I attended the Engineering stream, which consisted of “engineering antibodies” and “engineering bispecifics”. The presentations focused on new platforms for the development of successful antibody therapies. Personally, I found the presentation given by Dr. Johannes Lutz (CureVac) very interesting. He showed a potent mRNA technology. With this technology, mRNA, encoding a specific antibody of interest, is administered, which subsequently leads to rapid and sustained formation of antibodies.

The keynote lecture by Dr. Janine Schuurman (Genmab) was also very interesting. She showed two technologies, developed at Genmab, named Duobody and Hexabody which can be used for the creation of bispecific and immune effector enhanced antibodies, respectively.

Finally, I really liked the so-called Breakout Discussions. Per stream there were different topics, which formed the basis for the discussion. In a small group we sat around a table and discussed on a ‘Strategy for engineering and design of bispecific products’. Mainly people from industry joined the discussion, and that provided a good insight in how they approach antibody development within a company.

The breaks were in the exhibition hall. During all breaks there was enough time to discuss my poster with interested scientists, who provided valuable input for my own research. The breaks in the exhibition hall were also a good opportunity to network and I had great conversations with scientist from both academia and companies and we even talked about future possibilities for after my PhD.

I would like to thank the NVVI for awarding me the travel grant that enabled me to join the PEGS conference. Overall, it was a very valuable conference with many interesting presentations which will have influence on my current research as well as on my future career in science.