

Conference report
New frontiers in teaching genetics
15 June 2010 (Edinburgh)

This year's conference – *New frontiers in teaching genetics* – reflects Gengage's commitment to provide information, training and other opportunities for shared learning around public engagement and healthcare genetics in Scotland. Over 100 delegates, including biology teachers, upper year students and Gengage members, gathered at the John McIntyre Conference Centre, University of Edinburgh, on 15 June 2010 for a day of talks and interactive workshops.

The plenary presentations addressed current and future trends in genetics, including the effects genes have on our health; the development of a treatment for Pompe disease, recently fictionalised in the Harrison Ford film, *Extraordinary Measures*; and the implications of technological developments for the patient attending a genetic clinic. Feedback on the plenary sessions was very positive, one participant commenting that the talks 'brought genetics to life'.

The workshops provided an opportunity to explore issues around genetics through various interactive activities. These activities ranged from facilitated discussions about the ethics of recent advances in genetics to simulated DNA profiling, and featured unique and innovative teaching and learning resources. The workshops generated extensive and lively discussion about a variety of cutting-edge topics, including genetic testing, and genetic selection through pre-implantation genetic diagnosis. Feedback about the workshops was also very positive, the major complaint being that there was not enough time!

While there were a number of constructive suggestions about how the event might have been improved, the overall impression of the conference was strongly positive. One delegate said that it had been "...an excellent day. Extremely informative...", while another thought it was "A very enjoyable and relevant conference".

Dr Steve Sturdy, the Gengage grant holder, said that "this year's conference, which was organised by the Gengage Education sub-group, clearly shows that there is a great interest in and enthusiasm for on-going training and information exchange around healthcare genetics in Scotland. Participants made some very interesting suggestions for future events, including: a genetics debate for senior pupils; student conferences; CPD for teachers and talks about possible careers in genetics. We will certainly take these suggestions into consideration when planning our events for 2011. In the meantime, we will continue to provide information and resources for those designing and delivering genetics education in Scotland, as well as opportunities for shared learning. We are delighted by the response to this year's conference and look forward to seeing delegates at upcoming events and at our conference next year".

A full programme, including links to powerpoint presentations, is available on our website: www.gengage.org.uk