**Appendix to December 2013 Newsletter**

**Scholarship Reports**

***I have abbreviated longer scholarship reports for inclusion in the newsletter. Full copies of the reports are available on request.***

**A. Polish School of Medicine Memorial Fund**

**1. Mrs Joanna Rybka**

**Duration and dates of attachment**: 6 months from 01.12.2012 till 31.05.2013

**Location:** Academic Unit at the University of Edinburgh: Centre for Molecular Medicine  
The University of Edinburgh, Western General Hospital

**Supervisor:** Dr Kathy Evans **Category of application:** Research Project

**i. Description of the research project:** The Investigation of gene expression biomarkers for Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar Disorderis an extremely disabling condition, with an often poor outcome and high recurrence rate and currently available drugs are effective only after sustained administration. Thus, there is a high demand for further research to reveal molecular and neurochemical basis of disease with a main objective to identify novel therapeutic targets to better treat bipolar disorder.

The heritability of bipolar disorder is extremely high, but definition of the genetic variants and pathways responsible for disease susceptibility is still in its infancy. This knowledge deficit severely limits both development of more effective, better tolerated interventions and pharmacogenomic targeting of treatments. Micro RNAs (miRNAs) are emerging as interesting biomarkers, candidate genes and therapeutic targets for psychiatric illness.

The aim of a proposed research project was to investigate previously reported blood-based miRNA biomarkers in individuals at high genetic risk of bipolar disorder and identify the related gene pathways. This project was based on an established cohort, the Edinburgh Bipolar Family Study.

**ii. Status of the project**: Working on a joint scientific publication to present the results from the project

**iii. Skills developed during the project**: research skills in the field of psychiatric genetics and genomics including planning experiments, acquiring laboratory skills and undertaking data analyses with dedicated software.

**iv. Impact of the scholarship on the scholar professional development:**

# The Polish School of Medicine Memorial Fund Scholarship provided me with a unique opportunity to develop my scientific skills in the field of biological psychiatry. Currently I have been accomplishing a PhD project in Poland. My research is embedded in the field of biological psychiatry and I have been studying depression for the last 4 year. This scholarship provided me with an opportunity to develop new skills and to learn new techniques while using state of the art laboratory equipment and having access to the knowledge from world class experts in the field of psychiatric genetics and genomics which were Dr Kathy Evans and Professor David Porteous, naming only few of them. As much important as new skills and knowledge is the professional relationship developed during my 6 month attachment at Centre for Molecular Medicine, The University of Edinburgh. I still keep in touch with my group at University of Edinburgh, and we will be publishing together our results. It is likely to consider further collaborations in the future. Moreover, I met many scientists at different stage of their professional development, coming from different countries, which helped me to expand my network and that should also facilitate development of my scientific career in the future. Working abroad, learning new skills and contributing to the scientific results with high impact in the field of biological psychiatry has strengthen my professional profile significantly and should have long term impact on my scientific career. Finally, working and living in vibrant and culturally and historically enriched Edinburgh was also invaluable experience, making the scholarship unforgettable.

**v. Testimonial:**

Participation in Polish School of Medicine Memorial Fund Scholarship was very special professional and personal experience. It is a honour and responsibility to be beneficiary of   
a fund with such a beautiful and meaningful tradition. I feel now a part of a Polish-Scottish partnership for growing both nations throughout knowledge, humanity and collaboration.   
I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to Dr Maria Długołęcka-Graham for the immeasurable amount of support she has provided me throughout this scholarship and for her efforts in supporting Polish School of Medicine Memorial Fund Scholarship.

**2. Dr Marta Fichna**

**Duration /dates of attachment**: 11months from mid-September 2012

**Location:** Endocrinology Unit, Centre for Cardiovascular Science, Queen’s Medical Research Centre, Little France

**Supervisor** Professor Jonathan Seckl

**i. Introduction:**

I was awarded a scholarship from the Polish School of Medicine Memorial Fund for the academic year 2012/13. The generous support from PSMMF enabled me to undertake full time study and research at The University of Edinburgh under the overall supervision of Professor Jonathan Seckl. Professor Seckl is a researcher of great renown, coordinator of several scientific projects and author of many papers concerning the metabolism of steroids in humans and animal models. Currently he is less involved in research activities, but he still guides many of his younger colleagues at the University.

ii. **Research Projects:** During my stay in Edinburgh, from September 2012 till August 2013, I had an opportunity to participate in different stages of the research projects.

The preliminary plan was to join the group directed by Dr Nick Morton and to investigate the role of glucocorticoids (GCs) on prenatal beta-cell development. Unfortunately, due to some technical issues, this project was suspended.

Therefore, with the approval of Prof. Seckl, I moved to another project, which focused on postnatal effects of glucocorticoid on beta cell proliferation and also used a mouse model. In this study, I worked with Dr Sophie Turban-Rajaonah. We examined the effects of short course of exogenous steroids given at different ages before weaning… ….

**iii. Status of the Project:** Hopefully, all the data collected during our study, will enable us to publish a paper giving new insights into the role of steroids on postnatal beta cell development.

**iv. Testimonial**

I am very grateful to the Polish School of Medicine Memorial Fund for the unique opportunity to participate in this study. Thanks to the financial support that I received, I was able to cover all my subsistence costs and focus entirely on the research project. Moreover, during some free time, I was happy to appreciate the history and culture of the Scottish capital.

And last but not least, I would like to express many warm thanks to Dr Maria Długołęcka-Graham, who was a real good spirit of my stay, always so kind, ready to explain any doubts and help with any minor problems. I will definitely preserve the best memories of my stay in Edinburgh. Thank you very much.

**3. Dr Ewelina Gowin**

*Please describe your attachment/course briefly*

(The course was) A 5-day the Edinburgh Summer School in Clinical Education (ESSCE) 2013 organized by Dr Helen Cameron from Centre for Medical Education the University of Edinburgh.

All Summer School sessions took place in The Chancellor’s Building, Little France Crescent, next to the new Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh.

There were 32 participants mostly from United Kingdom.

The course consisted of workshops and lectures. Workshops were performed in small groups. The course was designed to improve practical skills in clinical education. The tutors facilitated ‘hands-on’ activities, encouraged everyone to be involved and heard and ensured all participants receive constructive feedback.

*What were the best aspects of the course?*

Interesting subjects, great presentation, great occasion to meet teachers with different experiences. The best part of the course was a simulated exam performed with real students.

*Was there anything that you felt could have been improved?* No

*How would you rate the course you attended overall?* Excellent

Are there any other comments/observations you would like to make?

Edinburgh is a beautiful city. The accommodation was great, very close to the University and city centre. The Summer School coincided with the Edinburgh Festival, which gave me a great opportunity to see many interesting shows.

**4. Dr Karolina Kuls**

The course was the ESSCE Edinburgh Summer School in Clinical Education from 12th 16th August 2013

*When did you first make contact with the course team?* 24.05.2013 – Dr Maria Dlugolecka-Graham and 22.07.2013 – Dr Michael Ross.

*How did you make contact with the team and have you any comments about your contact with the staff organising the course before it began?* Really helpful and willing, made the whole procedure MUCH easier. The organization is remarkable: course participant receive all the necessary documents and guidebooks in advance so he/she can prepare him/herself thoroughly

*Please describe your course briefly.* Helpful, enjoyable, sometimes a bit too long hours when the beautiful city was just waiting!

*What were the best aspects of the course?* Seeing Scottish standards, meeting amazing tutors, and small group teaching – my favourite part. The ESSCE gives you an unique opportunity to exchange experiences with educators from different schools and regions, in my case even from another country.

You have a chance to get to know various teaching methodology, I didn't expect that there are so many named, classified, distinct.

*Was there anything you felt could have been improved* On a large group teaching day I feel like we probably could have done a little bit more practical exercises, especially that eventually we were divided into very small groups, so we could have give more speeches just to get more feedback and tips from our incredible audience

*How would you rate the course overall?* Overall (it was a) very intensive course, a lot of information packed into a 5-day-long transmission (period). The good thing is that almost always you get to practise what you've just learnt- in this way the knowledge gets to the higher level of know-how.

Sometimes the content was not that much relevant but it was mostly due to the Scottish/Polish systems differences.

*Are there any other comments you would like to make?* Really good organisation.Beautiful city sets an amazing background for any activity - I know I want to go back to Edinburgh!

**Bóloz-Kulesza Trust Fund Scholarship Report**

**Dr Paweł Żebryk**

As mentioned in the main newsletter, Dr Żebryk prepared a short video which was shown during the meeting held with Polish medical university and research institute representatives in October 2013. This we have accepted as the equivalent of a written report.

Since completing his Masters Degree course, Dr Żebryk has been offered a position as coordinator of quality assessment of medical education in Poznan University of medical Sciences.

Dr Żebryk said that he also uses the techniques he learnt in the course of his clinical work in rheumatology and internal medicine

As part of his MSc dissertation he researched experiences of Poznan medical students who took part in the ERASMUS exchange programme that enabled them to visit many European countries and experience education there and plans to publish his findings.

As you can imagine, Paweł was incredibly grateful to the trustees of the Bóloz-Kulesza Trust Fund for their support and wrote to them thanking them for their generosity, without which he would not have been able to undertake the course.

I also received a very kind e-mail from him, part of which I have copied below:

“You deserve no less thank you, for if it had not been for you I would not have completed the MSc Programme. I cannot express my gratitude enough. I will certainly support younger minds in the future…….. Once again Maria, thank you so much for the work you have done for me and many others with such charm and kindness. There is no one quite like you! You will always be in our hearts because you are special!”

**Dr James & Bozena Bain Trust Fund Scholarship Reports**

**1. Aneta Fronczak**

**Attachment: Cardiology, RIE, 1-26th July 2013**

**Polish medical university: Warsaw Medical University**

The Electives Programme at the Edinburgh University was a valuable experience enabling me to understand medicine from a different perspective. Spending 4 weeks at the Cardiology Department was a perfect opportunity to witness various procedures, performed rarely in my home country.

As the majority of doctors were eager to teach and explain different complicated cases, I feel that my clinical knowledge improved greatly. I believe that the Royal Infirmary is a perfect place for Cardiology Electives due to the variety of interventions and number of patients admitted to the hospital.

As Invasive Cardiology is one of my greatest interests, I was more than satisfied with my 4-week electives. The Royal Infirmary has one of the main Cardiology Departments in Scotland and therefore the number of interventions in the Cath (catheterization) Lab enables to see different procedures, ways of diagnosis and treatment of both emergency and planned procedures.

As a medical student I was able to watch the admission of patients in the CCU, see echocardiography examination, visit Cath Lab and witness cardiothoracic surgery. Due to a huge variety of opportunities I could spend each day differently and therefore there was no possibility to get bored.

I must also admit, that the fact that I could use the medical sources at the local library was incredibly useful, as reading about the procedures, I was to witness the next day, was helpful for better understanding of the steps of each intervention.

I made many valuable friendships and have great memories connected with my stay.

**2. Aleksander Rutkiewicz**

***I received a preliminary e-mail report from Olek but his blog spot which is in Polish gives a fuller picture of what Aleksander did in his time in Edinburgh (details in the report*** ***below).***

A month in Scotland in St. John’s was one of the best months in my life. I look back on elective in A&E – it was really great time. It was very important for me. I could improve not only my bad English, but I could see something interesting, see how emergency medicine abroad looks like and get really useful clinical experience.

But first of all in Scotland I met a lot of nice, great, likable, helpful and always smiling people. I’m still in contact with some of them. I hope I will visit Scotland once again - soon!

I have a blog about history of medicine. I have written a report about historical aspects of my visit in Edinburgh. skalpelikarabin.blogspot.com

I will add more about my elective and the Dr James and Bozena Bain Memorial Trust Fund on it.

I have been very busy since I came back to Poland from Scotland. First of all I had to pass my licence exam. I’ve passed it but there was a lot of learning involved.

I’ve started my job (foundation programme) in the ‘Wojewodzki’ Hospital in my home town Bielsko-Biala. Now I’m in the emergency department but next week I start anaesthetics & intensive therapy.

I’ve started a doctorate in subject of history of medicine. I hope next year I’ll have my PhD.

Maria, I want to say, that everything is because of you. You told me about possibility of elective, you helped me with scholarship, you helped me with documents. You are great! I won’t forget it!

**Dlugolecka-Graham Scholarship**

**Scholarship Holder:** Maciej Rojna

**Polish medical university:** Nicolaus Copernicus University, Collegium Medicum Bydgoszcz.

**Attachment:** Critical Care Research Group, Intensive Care Unit (ICU) from 01.08.2013 – 25.09.2013

**Report**

I joined the Critical Care Research Group, which consisted of research nurses, physiotherapists as well as medical doctors. They were all collaborating in conducting research and clinical trials aimed at improvement of care of ICU patients, who commonly face serious physical, emotional and psychosocial sequelae. I was asked to make myself familiar with basic principles behind the process of conducting clinical trials, particularly complex intervention evaluations. Next, I learned the design and the protocol of RECOVER Study, a large clinical trial evaluating the introduction of complex rehabilitation intervention to post-ICU patients.

My task was to look at a subset of available data from RECOVER study, mainly the Visual Analogue Scale assessment on which patients marked the intensity of common symptoms. After performing a basic statistical analysis, main goal was to examine patients’ symptomatology at hospital discharge, but also to explore what was the distribution and evolution of symptoms during hospitalization, and how strongly was it related to disease severity on admission. With prof. Walsh’s assistance we managed to submit an abstract based on those result to Scottish Intensive Society 23rd Annual Scientific Meeting that will take place on 23rd and 24th January.

Apart from getting my hands on research, I also wanted to be involved in clinics. Professor Walsh introduced to me some of the ICU staff workers, so I could join clinical rounds with NHS consultants, listening to cases overview and therapy plans. An interesting experience was for me to attend doctors meetings, reports of all cases from previous week, as well as weekly meetings pertaining death cases in ICU, where each case was discussed separately putting an emphasis on what could have been possibly done more for certain patient and his family. I also attended some of the tutorials organized for junior staff and students.

As I am still a student and my interests range to other medical disciplines, I tried to get involved in lectures or meetings organized by other departments while spending my time in Royal Infirmary. For instance I attended 10th Scottish Neuroscience Group Meeting in Roslin Institute and the lecture delivered by Canadian professor, ‘Improving recovery after cardiac arrest’, along with other lectures with 5th local year medical students.

It was also a great pleasure to participate in research retreat to Firbush Center along with most of the Critical Care research team members. During those three days, small scientific meetings were held, summarizing and reviewing current research project that were run, as well as presenting the initial results of clinical trials and basic science investigations. I found it very inspiring, to be part of those meetings, to listen to discussions after each presentation. Very frequently I realized that only after some questions have been asked, I got deeper understanding of the whole process and concept behind given study, and it also stimulated my thinking about it. That is why I really enjoyed staying in such excellent academic environment, especially after realization that it is not common for student who have not graduated yet, especially from other country. Furthermore, after conferences we were given opportunity of attending some sports activities, like kayaking or canoeing which was by itself very pleasant and exciting. During the trip I spoke with young doctors who just finished their Foundation Program, they shared with me their experiences and observations which was very useful as I am myself thinking about applying to AFP/FP again next year.

The best aspects of my attachment was to witness how health care and scientific work are reciprocally connected in the setting of Intensive Care, to be inspired by academic environment and to meet new people from all over the world. I also realized how much depend on how work is organized within the department, and that this is the crucial role and merit of leader, head of department.

The only thing I can regret is that during August, normally held research meetings in Queen’s Medical Research Center did not take place due to holiday period. I would have been very happy to attend them and listen what are the new directions in basic science undertook by local scientists. But even without this, my time in Edinburgh was full of inspiration and excitement.

I would like to thank Dr Maria Dlugolecka-Graham for constant support and advice, she actually organized all the formal aspects of my attachment, which I am sure would not be possible without her assistance. Also, I am very grateful to Prof. Tim Walsh, my supervisor who took care of me, introduced me to the rest of the staff, I was really impressed by his approach to science and patients and by his commitment to quality improvement of care.

Although I did not travel much around Scotland (except Firbush Center), I very much enjoyed Edinburgh with all its attractions, particularly the National Gallery Museum, Surgeon’s Hall Museum and Edinburgh Castle.

If I were to rate my attachment in 0-10 scale I would indicate 9.