

Paul Bassan – Report on SPEC2010

The SPEC conference is the largest international biological and biomedical vibrational spectroscopy conference in this field. The conference is held biannually, and in 2010 it was held at The University of Manchester in England, hosted by my PhD supervisor, Dr. Peter Gardner. The conference comprised a good combination of topics in new developments in vibrational spectroscopy and new applications in the biological and biomedical fields. Of particular benefit to me was the opportunity to discuss with researchers and principal investigators from around the world, some of which are users of an algorithm which I have been developing as part of my PhD. This software corrects infrared spectra for scattering effects, which makes meaningful single-cell infrared analysis possible. Users of my software were able to ask me questions directly and also make suggestions about the current version of the software which will help me improve it.

This year the conference included a full day of presentations given by and aimed at the clinicians who will have benefitted from learning about the current advances in the field. There were also discussion sessions, which allowed for clinicians to voice their concerns and needs, as well as strategy for bringing the outcomes of the research into the clinical environment. It was discussed that the science has reached a certain level where many applications work successfully, however each group in the community is relatively isolated. It was addressed that there is a need for multi-centre international clinical trials to show that vibrational spectroscopy can aid in medical problems such as the diagnosis of disease state.

The conference was a great opportunity for myself and other students to meet potential future employers for post-doctoral positions, as most of the research group leaders working in the field were present and available to chat to on a one to one basis. The converse is also true that employers can meet potential candidates and encourage them to apply for upcoming suitable positions.