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YMCC and YSN: An Opportunity for Scientific and Cultural Exchange

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Promoting exchange between early career researchers in Europe and the United States is vital for establishing a global Medicinal Chemistry and Chemical Biology community. Such exchanges facilitate knowledge sharing, encourage collaboration, and foster cultural diversity. Early career researchers can leverage their expertise and contribute to breakthroughs in drug development and understanding complex biological systems. Moreover, international collaborations enhance career prospects and create a collective impact on global health challenges. Through exchange programs, early career researchers gain exposure to different scientific traditions, forming connections that pave the way for future collaborations and advancements in the field. Together, they can build a strong, interconnected global community in Medicinal Chemistry and Chemical Biology. For these reasons, the American Chemical Society Division of Medicinal Chemistry Young Medicinal Chemists Committee (ACS MEDI-YMCC) and the European Federation for Medicinal Chemistry Young Scientists Network (EFMC-YSN) teamed up to create exchange opportunities for early career scientists.

Complete contact information is available at: <https://pubs.acs.org/10.1021/acs.jmedchem.3c01401>

Views expressed in this editorial are those of the authors and not necessarily the views of the ACS.

YMCC: Who Are We?

The Young Medicinal Chemists Committee (YMCC) is a subcommittee of the ACS Division of Medicinal Chemistry (MEDI). To refine our previous editorial¹ regarding YMCC's creation: In 2018, Dr. Wendy Young organized a panel discussion at the Spring ACS National Meeting between a group of early career medicinal chemists and the MEDI Executive Committee. The goal was to identify strategies for MEDI to improve opportunities for this group. Dr. Paul Ornstein, then chair of MEDI, created the YMCC. He recognized the need to alter the demographics of the Executive Committee to better reflect today's practicing medicinal chemists, and realized the best way to accomplish this was to create a new MEDI committee that incorporated this diverse group of medicinal chemists. He identified Dr. Erika Araujo as the first chair and championed for her to join the MEDI Executive Committee as a member-at-large to ensure that early career chemists were represented in discussions. The YMCC has continued to grow and has become a driving force for MEDI, spearheading social media efforts and the division's nontechnical programming at national meetings.

The YMCC does not have an age limit for membership. This is intentional, and the programming that we offer is relevant for chemists who are starting out in this field. This is achieved through the development of online programming that relates to early career researchers, mentoring and networking opportunities, and our new collaboration with YSN to support an international exchange program between the USA and Europe.

YSN: Who Are We?

The Young Scientists Network of the European Federation for Medicinal Chemistry (EFMC-YSN) is a platform launched in 2019 to support and promote the development of early career medicinal chemists and chemical biologists in Europe. EFMC created the YSN to ensure that all career stages have a voice in the EFMC and can contribute to the EFMC long-term strategy of shaping the community.²

The EFMC-YSN provides opportunities for early career scientists to network with their peers, participate in scientific events, and access educational and career development resources. Through the network, members can attend workshops, training courses, and other events providing them with insights into current research, emerging trends, and career opportunities. The network also gives the chance to young scientists to present their research at in-person or virtual meetings, establish collaborations, and develop their professional skills.

Overall, the EFMC-YSN is an excellent resource for young medicinal chemists and chemical biologists who are looking to establish themselves in the field. It plays an important role in supporting the growth of the future generation of scientists in Europe. The EFMC-YSN does not strictly enforce an age limit and allows people who followed nontraditional career paths to join at any time. The general aim of YSN is to bring young people together and provide opportunities to early career medicinal chemists and chemical biologists.

YSN-YMCC Grant to Attend ACSMEDI|EFMC Medicinal Chemistry Frontiers Meetings.

One of the initiatives that YMCC and YSN have championed is the creation of the joint YSN-YMCC travel grant, which will see a reciprocal exchange of medicinal chemistry early career researchers between the United States and Europe to attend the Medicinal Chemistry Frontiers meeting. We proudly announce the names of the first awardees (Figure 1) of the YSN-YMCC travel grant to attend the ACSMEDI|EFMC Medicinal Chemistry Frontiers meeting that was held in Boston, Massachusetts, on June 10–13, 2023 (<https://www.medchemfrontiers.org/>).

Aleša Bricelj, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Aleša Bricelj obtained her master's degree in pharmacy at the Faculty of Pharmacy, University in Ljubljana, in 2019. She is currently a fourth-year Ph.D. student under the supervision of Assist. Prof. Izidor Sosic and Prof. Marko Anderluh at the Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Ljubljana. Her research focuses on utilizing PROTACs for targeted protein degradation of various proteins involved in malignancies. Aleša presented a poster on "Lessons Learned from Successes and Struggles in Implementing PROTAC Methodology for a Panel of Proteins Involved in Malignancies". On receiving the YSN-YMCC Grant, Aleša said that it *"has advanced my scientific career immensely. Apart from gaining additional expertise that will undoubtedly help with my current and future research work, the symposium also provided an excellent opportunity to interact with many brilliant minds, establish new scientific collaborations, and strengthen existing ones."*

Andreas Lutzens, Uppsala University, Sweden.

Andreas Lutzens has received his master's degree in molecular design in chemistry from Ghent University, Belgium. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in molecular life sciences at Uppsala University, Sweden. Andreas joined the lab of Prof. Jens Carlsson in 2017. He presented his work on the "Discovery of Chemical Probes through Virtual Screening of Vast Chemical Space". According to Andreas, this grant enabled him to engage with experts from around the world at the ACSMEDI|EFMC Medicinal Chemistry Frontiers meeting and *"has led to new insights on how to tackle my ongoing projects."* He also mentioned that *"the invaluable connections established during the ACSMEDI|EFMC Medicinal Chemistry Frontiers meeting have significantly strengthened my professional network, initiating several exciting international collaborations."*

The next travel award will be funded by the MEDI YMCC to support the travel of two U.S.-based early career researchers to attend the EFMC|ACSMEDI Medicinal Chemistry Frontiers meeting in Utrecht, The Netherlands, on April 8–11, 2024. Both Aleša and Andreas stated that they would encourage other early career researchers to apply to future calls for applications. So please watch social media, the MEDI newsletter, and the MEDI Web site (<https://www.acsmedchem.org/>) for announcements about applications opening!

Lori Ferrins, Margaret Olson, Krupanandan Haranahalli, Melissa Grenier-Davies, and Matthew Boudreau are members of the ACS MEDI-YMCC committee. Briec Matagne,

Etienne J. Donckele, and Chiara Borsari are members of the EFMC-YSN. All of these people have volunteered their time to develop this cross collaboration. We would like to acknowledge the support of this collaboration by MEDI and EFMC members who attended the EFMC-ISMC meeting in Nice, France, in September 2022 and discussed collaborative activities. MEDI was represented by Amjad Ali and Daniel Harki, and Yves Auberson, Kristina Goncharenko, and Rui Moreira represented EFMC.

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Figure 1.
Inaugural award winners, Aleša Bricelj (left) and Andreas Luttens (right).