Wish you were here: Meetings, no meetings, meeting reports

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We’ve all been saying it: These are unprecedented times. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are incredibly wide-ranging and affect all facets of life. One that is hitting the scientific community very hard is the cancellation of meetings, large and small. While we are well-versed in connecting with colleagues and collaborators across a variety of online platforms, these do not replace the immensely gratifying aspects of attending meetings in person: the pleasure of catching up with old friends and making new ones, the insights gained from having real-time conversations with others working on the same topic but with different expertise and perspectives, and the stimulating new scientific ideas we carry home. We have all been feeling the disappointment as we learn that one meeting after another is forced to cancel, from the vibrant ASBMB annual meeting to summer conferences of all types.

Another loss from the appropriate but painful decision to cancel the ASBMB annual meeting was the chance to hear from our Herbert Tabor Early Career Investigator Awardees, who represent the best science published in JBC in the preceding year. This year, the competition was particularly fierce. We hope and anticipate that we will be able to hear from the winners at next year’s ASBMB annual meeting. But in the meantime, we want to raise a toast to Wenchao Zhao, Yue Yang, Manisha Dagar, Febin Varghese, and Ayumi Nagashima-Kasahara as our 2020 winners. We’ve captured their award-winning 2019 papers (1–5) on the JBC website (6), and extended profiles of the winners can be found in ASBMB Today (7).

To offer a taste of what the whole ASBMB meeting would have been like, we’ve also created a virtual issue collating some of the recent research published in JBC, JLR, and MCP by the scheduled speakers (8). Please feel free to put on your nametag before you peruse the fascinating results and resources from the group.

In addition to this collection and the many other online conference options being explored at the moment, there is one tried-and-true way to learn about scientific meetings: the meeting report. In anticipation of a return to normalcy, JBC is now joining many sister journals in accepting this article type. These summaries can offer some of the benefits of attendance post facto, capturing the latest findings and putting them into context, identifying unexpected themes or challenges that everyone was talking about, or describing how colleagues are putting the newest tools and techniques into practice. We have updated our author instructions (9) to provide information about this new (for us) article type and welcome your inquiries regarding potential publication.

In this issue, we publish our inaugural meeting report, capturing updates from the 2019 ASBMB Symposium on “Emerging Roles of the Nucleolus,” organized by Jennifer Gerton, Francesca Duncan and Craig Pikaard (10). The report, written by Duncan and attendees Susan Baserga and Patrick DiMario, describes the advances in RNA biology, nuclear organization, gene regulation, and genome stability discussed at the meeting. We hope you enjoy a brief trip to Kansas, if only in your mind.

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