

Retrospective Interview with 2013 ACCP Student Abstract Award Winner Songmao “Ben” Zhang

Dr. Ben Zhang has shown great enthusiasm about his participation in the ACCP Annual Meeting and winning one of the 2013 Student Abstract Awards. Thank you, Dr. Zhang, for being willing to share your thoughts and congratulations on your accomplishments!

Please tell us about your career since receiving the Student Abstract Award?

I have been working as a PK/PD scientist at a pharmaceutical company of Johnson & Johnson since early December, 2013.



How has receiving the Student Abstract award impacted your career?

Winning this award gave me the opportunity to present my study findings both as a poster and more importantly, as an oral podium presentation. The hiring manager for that particular position happened to be in the ACCP meeting and chatted with me for over 30 minutes about a significant amount of details related to the study objectives, modeling strategy, results and future directions. Furthermore, our discussions covered other general PK/PD questions beyond the content of the poster. This face-to-face conversation in a more relaxed environment (e.g., most attendees were hold a glass of wine while discussing with the presenters) built the foundation for conducting more formal interviews in the company, just within a month after the ACCP meeting concluded. In addition, several members of the same company attended my oral presentation at ACCP and asked additional questions, which gave me the opportunity to further demonstrate my knowledge on various subjects. To go beyond these, I was able to meet more senior director level people in the company during lunch sessions and chatted about my strong interest in learning more about the position and the company.

Without receiving the ACCP Student Abstract Award, I would not be able to get the information so conveniently about a position that well-matched my background and training, not to mention to have the rare chances to talk to the hiring manager and other directors directly.

What advice would you give to current student members in regards to the importance of receiving awards like this?

The importance of receiving awards like this cannot be overstated. I have won multiple awards for several national meetings in the past. The ACCP award stood out, partly because of a highly focused group of attendees in study areas that are most relevant to my background. The good industry representation in the ACCP meeting is one enabling factor for effective conversations between the students/trainees with some key industry people. The same logic applies to academic and regulatory positions due to the active attendance of people in those areas too.

Winning an award like this is only one of the many steps that are beneficial for advancing one's career, but nonetheless, a very critical milestone for me. I will always be thankful for ACCP and numerous mentors throughout my different phases of research and study, particularly Drs Stephan Schmidt and Larry Lesko at the Center for Pharmacometrics and Systems Pharmacology at the University of Florida, where the abstract award-winning research was conducted.

Do good research, present your research to the right audience through excellent platforms such as the ACCP annual meeting and be passionate and proactive in whatever you do will be some advice I can offer through my "INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDY".