

# DBM Scientific Spring Retreat 2017



As was the case in previous years, the DBM PhD retreat proved, once again, to be a great opportunity for new and advanced PhD students alike to discuss their projects with equals and at the same time learn about the research that is done in other locations of the DBM.

This spring we ventured to the canton of St. Gallen to spend a couple of days at the beautifully located town of Quarten, where we arrived quite early in the morning. To get the students to mingle right from the beginning

of the retreat, we started the day with an icebreaker game encouraging everybody to find out more about their fellows.

For the fifth edition of the retreat we made a new addition to the program and held a Mini-Symposium on the first day. The speakers were chosen from miscellaneous scientific areas and included:

**Georg Keller**, who explained how the mind alters our reality and how mismatches between expectation and perception are being processed in neuronal circuits.

**Heinrich Leonhardt**, who introduced us to the way in which DNA methylation patterns are generated and explained the complex mechanisms that are responsible for their establishment.

**Polly Matzinger**, who presented the story behind her Danger-Immune-Response-Model and, using only an overhead projector, inspired a very vivid and stimulating discussion.

**Hugo Snippert**, who showed us his findings in tracing the propagation of stem cell populations on intestinal microvilli and how they translated their findings to investigate tumor development in organoids generated from human samples.

We feel very lucky to have had the chance to hear such enthusiastic speakers and want to thank them again for making the journey. The bar for future guest speakers has been set pretty high now!





The symposium was followed by an apéro during which the students had the chance to engage in a direct conversation with the guest speakers. In our first poster session, some of the PhD students then got to present their own work before we all made our way to a bonfire set up just a bit downhill from the hotel.

The second day of the retreat was entirely dedicated to the scientific progress of the PhD students which they presented in either a talk or at the second poster session. We were truly astonished by the high quality of all the posters and presentations this year. However, public vote decided on the most outstanding ones and Inner-City vouchers, kindly sponsored by Actelion, were given to:

**Best talk:**

1<sup>st</sup> Julie Gamart  
2<sup>nd</sup> Charlotte Navntoft  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sascha Fischer

**Best poster:**

1<sup>st</sup> Jan Eckhardt  
2<sup>nd</sup> Milica Vulin  
3<sup>rd</sup> Virginie Tissières

So by solemnly passing on the golden pipettes to the winners, the scientific part of the retreat was officially concluded and the evening was ended with a fun quiz-session combined with (at least for some) a visit to the local pub for the last drink of the night.

Before heading back to Basel the next day, there was a chance to explore the beautiful surroundings of Lake Walenstadt either during a hike through the scenery or a boat ride on the lake.

We want to thank everybody again for participating, we really had a great group of people this year. Hopefully many of you got some new ideas for their projects and established new contacts with people from the other DBM locations.

Last, but not least, we are especially grateful for the help of Nicole Schaeren-Wiemers. We are thankful to have such a committed person supporting the activities of the PhD Club and the students of our PhD program!

We hope everyone had as much fun as we had and we would love to see many of you around for one of our other events this year or for the retreat in 2018!

**Your DBM PhD-Club**

