**Going bald? Found your first grey hair? Not happy with frizzy hair? Losing too much hair? Don’t panic! Hitchhiker’s guide to hair galaxy**

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In June 2010, I had a privilege to attend the World Congress of Hair Research in Cairns. It was an eye opening experience for me to meet hundreds of hair biology researchers, dermatologists, and geneticists around the world and to witness recent advances in hair biology.

My interest in hair biology began when I undertook research elective placement in Korea over the last summer holiday. I must admit I was not interested in hair at all before, but learning hair histology and accelerated hair growth in response to different agents changed my perception of hair biology a lot. The research team I was involved in was presenting at this Congress in June so it was a good opportunity to continue the lesson. (see figure 1 below)

International delegates were welcomed by Aboriginal dances and didgeridoo performance from local Indigenous community, and a special visit from Cairns zoo. My primary school education was very instrumental in explaining different animals to children whose parents were presenters.

Despite the fact that it is the smallest organ in our body, the hair follicle plays important roles in our body. Functions of hair include heat insulation (eg. piloerection, also known as goosebumps), protection of important external organs (eg. Protection from UV light, protecting eyes from dirt, sweat and rain), tactile sensory receptor, and most importantly its cosmetic effect. It is amazing how this tiny organ is managing to control all of these functions. What is more exciting is that the mechanism of the hair follicle is modulated by major stress hormones as well as all other hormones we learnt in endocrine lectures and ones I never heard of. During Professor Ralf Paus’ lecture, it appeared as if the hair follicle is a snapshot of one’s endocrine profile. (see figure 2 below)

Interesting points from other presenters include using garlic gel in treating alopecia areata, eyelash lengthening effect of glaucoma medication (potential candidate to replace Lancome mascara!), and Professor Rodney Sinclair’s new anatomy of the hair involving multiple hair bulbs in one follicle.

Several months after the Congress, I am still astonished by the complexity of hair biology and inspired to explore more of the hair galaxy in the future in my own research.