Dear BALR community members,

I am an MRC AIM PhD student at the University of Birmingham, researching the role of extracellular vesicles in the pathogenesis of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. I would like to be the student representative for the BALR because networking and guidance have shaped my own path into respiratory research. Local, regional, national and international conferences, have given me valuable opportunities to meet other researchers and learn from them, which has ultimately supported my development. I believe networking within the BALR, particularly between early-career researchers, could be strengthened through dedicated events and support at the national society meetings and beyond. One idea I think would be particularly beneficial would be an informal early-career networking session at each national meeting, allowing genuine connections to be formed between PhD students across the country. Being close to the start of my PhD, I know how difficult it can be to start new projects, and I can be here throughout the 2-year post to try to see changes through.

Since starting my research, I believe I have been able to integrate well into the respiratory research community, learning about the field and talking with other researchers across the country. I have presented at the BTS and ERS scientific conferences in addition to local midlands interstitial lung disease research alliance (MIRA) and midland thoracic society meetings giving me experience with talking across diverse audiences; from scientists and clinicians to patient groups where I have learnt to adapt the message to each. I have also begun to recruit patients to an observational study of IPF. This has given me insight into patient involvement in research and solidified my idea of the importance of hearing the thoughts of everyone involved; a principle which equally applies to the student representative role.

While studying I have also taken on the role of PGR student representative within the department of inflammation and ageing, where I have organised social events and liaised with PGR leads to better inform PhD students within the department, which I believe would give me the tools to try and implement similar ideas on a larger scale with the BALR. I believe it is particularly important to foster connections between researchers outside of an academic environment, and by talking with fellow PhD students across the UK respiratory research community I would be excited to try and represent all of their views and ideas to the rest of the BALR committee.

I already enjoy networking with fellow respiratory researchers at the BALR and more widely at other respiratory meetings and would welcome the opportunity to more formally support PhD students as their representative.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards,

Charlie