**2023 ECR Innovation Grant Holders’ Testimonials:**

**Martina Milighetti : Understanding the flexibility and dynamics of T cell receptor (TCR) complementarity-determining region hypervariable loops by using X-ray crystallography and NM**

**1. What was your motivation for applying?**

I wanted to try out the application process for funding as I had never done it before, and we had an exciting project idea stemming from my PhD work which could easily be adapted into the application.

**2. How did you benefit from applying?**

I got very thoughtful feedback both from my PI during the writing process and from the committee after the interview. Preparing the interview presentation and defending my idea first to my lab in a mock interview and then to the panel really helped me clarify what the strengths and weaknesses of my proposed project were and understand what people look for in a project proposal.

**3. What have you done with the award funds and how will this help your career progression?**

The award funds were used to buy consumables for the proposed project, and allowed me to work for a few weeks in a collaborator’s lab, doing something new which was outside of my direct PhD project, which was a great learning opportunity. This collaboration has continued after I left UCL and I hope I will be able to use both the data being generated and the contacts for future fellowship applications. Moreover, I have used the experience gained from this award to apply for a larger postdoctoral fellowship at my current position.

**Elizabeth Chan: Mechanisms of vaccine resistance in emerging serotype 3 Streptococcus pneumoniae**

**1. What was your motivation for applying?**

I wanted to get more experience grant writing and had a new project idea when the call went out, so I decided to apply for the award.

**2. How did you benefit from applying?**

Having a track record of successfully getting funding is always beneficial for a career in academia. The committee was very good with providing feedback on strengths/weaknesses of the application, and I will definitely use the advice in future funding applications.

**3. What have you done with the award funds and how will this help your career progression?**

I have used the funds to buy consumables and supplies for the project I proposed. We’re in the data analysis and writing up part of the project, so the paper (and confidence boost!) from getting this award will hopefully make me a more competitive candidate for fellowships.

