

Studying muscle regeneration in Boston.

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My American adventure started in January 2016, when I joined Amy Wagers' laboratory in Harvard University for an internship to finish my Master studies at Utrecht University. During the past 8 months, I worked in a circulating protein that regulates muscle regeneration and aging, GDF11. GDF11 was shown to improve muscle regeneration and muscle stem cell function in old mice, and it was proposed to be an "anti-aging" protein. My project comprised a combination of *in vitro* experiments and mouse models to find the primary source of GDF11 and characterize its effect and signaling on muscle. Our final goal was to understand how this protein modulates muscle stem cell aging, in order to find new ways to restore a more "youthful" muscle function in old individuals. As you can imagine, I didn't get close to that goal, but I could generate and analyze new mouse models that are producing nice results. If everything goes as planned, these results will be published! It is very nice to see how hard work eventually pays-off. Besides the scientific side of the lab, the personal part was also super nice! Everyone was very helpful and during summer we organized Friday borrels at the yard next to our building. We even joined a volleyball league, and made it to the final!! Okay, we were in the non-competitive, fun-only league, but still it was great!



Wager's lab volleyball team. I am the second on the left



The Charles river, frozen during winter

Outside of the lab, I spent most of my time exploring Boston and its amazing surroundings. Boston is a great city with a lot to do. Sports (we went to a basketball and ice hockey game), museums, sailing (free if you have a friend that studies at MIT and is willing to take you out!) and maaaaany cool pubs to go for a beer. This winter was not particularly bad (even though during February we reached -20 degrees, with a wind-chill that made it like -46!!!) so during the weekends I went skiing near Boston. There are ski resorts less than 1 hour by car, so you can just go and come back in the same day. During spring and summer, we explore natural parks in New Hampshire and Vermont, and enjoy the beach at Cape Cod. Besides having amazing science, the USA has amazing nature.

These 8 months in the USA have been a great experience that I will never forget. I'd like to thank the Nora Baart Foundation for their support.