

Metabolism and mojitos in San Francisco – Céline Mahieu

My journey started January 2015, when I traded dreary Amsterdam for sunny San Francisco. For 7 months I joined the Goga Lab at the University of California San Francisco for an internship to fulfil my last duties as a Master students from the 'Cancer, Stem Cells, and Developmental Biology' program at Utrecht University.



The lab

While arranging my internship I already got the impression I lucked out on my lab, but once I arrived it turned out to be even better. I received great mentorship from my supervisor and the support of all other lab members was equally great. The Goga Lab focusses on several very different aspects of MYC-overexpressing cancers. I worked on the role of fatty acid oxidation (FAO) in MYC-overexpressing triple negative breast cancer (MO-TNBC). Our lab found that MO-TNBC displays increased FAO, and inhibition of FAO abrogates tumor growth *in vivo*. As one part of my internship, I further characterized the effects of FAO inhibition on the tumor cells. For the other part of my internship I aimed to find a mechanism by which MYC increases FAO in these tumors.

During my internship I got the chance to learn many new techniques, but also received the freedom to create an independent project on my own. Being able to design my own project and come up with my own theories has taught me most of all. Finally, it is great to see that hard working pays off, because my work has led to co-authorship on a paper recently accepted in *Nature Medicine*.

The other cool stuff

Okay, so I could be found in lab most of the time (and sometimes a little bit too much of the time), but San Francisco had so much more to offer. Already on my first day I met some great people and throughout the rest of my stay I made friends I hope to still call friends when I'm old and boring. With those techies, internationals, or not-so-local-but-still-more-local-than-me UCSF grad students I have seen all the best spots and bars of the city (although I have trouble remembering all of them – for various reasons). We have explored the Bay Area and beyond, with weekend-trips or day-trips, hikes, river-tubing, winery tours, surfing sessions, bonfires, bike-trips (still Dutch!), festivals, and dancing sessions until the bars closed. I even started to like IPA's. All these moments, together with an incredible learning experience in the lab have made these months unforgettable for me. Because I loved it so much, I decided to extend my stay with 7 more months. I am só excited about what those extra months will bring me.

