

Master's internship at the Harvard Department of Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology

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During the first internship of the master's program Molecular Mechanisms of Disease of the Radboud University Nijmegen I worked on reproductive immunology. In this context I visited a conference in Naples, Italy where I came in touch with Dr. Tamara Tilburgs who works at the lab of Professor Jack Strominger. I got the opportunity to join this research group at the Harvard Institute for Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for my second internship.



I had learned the basics of isolating maternal lymphocytes from pregnancy related tissues in Nijmegen. Going to Harvard gave me the opportunity to learn how to also isolate fetal cells, extravillous trophoblasts. My project was focused on regulatory T cells isolated from the fetal-maternal interface. I worked on three different kinds of regulatory T cells and I studied their characteristics and functional capacities to suppress pro-inflammatory effector T cells. Looking back, I could get a lot of work done within 7.5 months and I could make use of state of the art techniques like a chip carrying out 96x96 qPCR reactions.

Working with primary samples, I got used to working until the middle of the night when needed and it was also normal to work in the weekend. However, I was never alone at the lab, even if was still busy at 2am. Of course it was not always easy but it was a great experience. Working together at unusual hours created a strong bond with my lab mates. The lab was not just a work place but the place to spend day and night and have fun together. I also spend a lot of time outside of the lab with co-workers. Things like going to the beautiful farm of Professor Strominger together are a great experience.



Cambridge is the part of the Boston area that harbors Harvard and MIT. It is a great working environment where everyone is very passionate about what they do. There is a variety of academic events to attend in Cambridge. Also non-scientifically, there is always something to do in Cambridge or Boston. Boston is full of nice cafés, interesting buildings, museums and there are even islands and beaches. I can only recommend to visit this exciting and inspiring place.

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