

Nora Baart Foundation – My internship in Boston – Lisa van der Vorm

My name is Lisa van der Vorm, and I have recently graduated from my Master Biomedical Sciences at the Radboud University Nijmegen.

Early in the morning at the 28th of December, with just a couple of days left in 2015, I found myself at Schiphol Airport, saying goodbye to my family and friends. 8 hours later I arrived at Boston Logan airport, my new home for the next 7 months. I had lived abroad before, in London (UK) for 4 months, and that positive experience left me eager to explore other cultures and parts of the world. Boston, also known as the “Hub” or “Beantown”, is the oldest city of the United States, the city of many great sports teams (a.o. the Patriots, Celtics and Red Sox), the famous marathon and of course of the best universities in the world, Harvard and MIT. It didn’t take long before I felt at home here, thanks to my great roommates, colleagues and the “European” feel of the city.

I performed my internship at the laboratory of Dr. Barry Paw at the Harvard Medical School-affiliated Brigham & Women’s Hospital. Dr. Paw’s group was small, with 2 postdocs and one other student besides me, but they are very good at what they do and they were very helpful, especially when I arrived here with only very limited “wet lab” experience.

I worked on two projects, focusing on functional analyses of mitochondrial proteins involved in heme metabolism, namely the chaperone CLPX and the transporter TMEM14C. For the first project I studied the functional consequences of a mutation in CLPX that was identified in patients with porphyria, using two cell types. The TMEM14C project comprised genotyping, crossing and phenotypical analysis of zebrafish mutants generated by CRISPR/Cas9. In addition, I wrote a chapter for a textbook on methods in zebrafish research.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to perform this independent research product and to have learned such a wide variety of molecular biological and biochemical techniques, such as cloning, Western blotting, PCR, protein stability assays, (a lot of!) cell culture and working with zebrafish.

All the theoretical, practical and scientific professional skills that I acquired during this internship will surely be of great use in my future job as a Ph.D. candidate, as well as in daily life. I am very thankful for the support that I received from the Nora Baart Foundation to make my 7-month Master thesis internship in Boston (MA), United States financially possible. I’m looking back at a great and memorable experience, and I hope that one day I will get the opportunity to visit Boston, my home-away-from-home for these 7 months, and the Paw lab again.



*The Paw lab, with from left to right:
Back row: David Palmieri (secretary), me, Martin Kafina (lab manager), Bryce Klehm (summer student).
Front row: Issy Meckler (summer student), Dr. Barry Paw (PI), Jacky Chung (postdoc), Yvette Yien (postdoc).*