

Overseas to Oxford: Cancer research in the United Kingdom

The Oxford Institute for Radiation Oncology, Oxford, United Kingdom

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Unlike many of the awardees of the Nora Baart Foundation, my journey was a relatively short one. Instead of going to the United States as most of them do, my destination was the small city of Oxford in the United Kingdom. Because I already had experience with doing an internship abroad (I had spent 5 months in Toronto two years before this internship), I was not so much nervous as I was excited!

The coming 7 months I was going to spend my time at Dr. Ester Hammond's lab, where I was tasked with finding the role of ATM Interacting (ATMIN) in the DNA damage response of cancer cells. One of my friends had visited this lab before me, and her excitement definitely rubbed off on me! And rightfully so, since the lab was absolutely amazing: Dr. Hammond has a wonderful team of scientists from a wide range of nationalities (Brazilian, Polish, Ukrainian, British, Irish, Greek, and now Dutch as well). All of them made sure I

integrated in the lab really quickly, partially by going to pubs together, but also by competing together in running events such as the Oxford Town & Gown 10K race. The atmosphere in the lab was even better than I had hoped for, and I felt part of a team that was always willing to help you out with your experiments, or grab a coffee with you when things didn't go the way you liked them to go.



This spirit definitely helped me stay motivated and get through some of the more demanding experiments, which occasionally required me to come back to the lab at 4:00 AM.

I didn't only spend time at the lab of course: I met my friends regularly at the pub and made a sport of going to as many different pubs as we could, we volunteered together at the Oxford Science Festival, I made a trip to Barcelona to visit a friend, went hitchhiking and camping in Wales, and even took part in the International Pillow fight at one of the most famous landmarks in Oxford.

In the lab, the experiments worked out very different from what we expected (I have to be vague here, we're in the process of publishing our findings) but we still managed to make a sense of it. One of the most amazing things is I was given a chance to go to an international conference. The Wolfsberg meeting on Molecular Radiation Biology/Oncology was absolutely amazing; I met my supervisor of my internship in Toronto again, met many scientists, and discussed my research with several of them. It was my first conference with my own data to present, and it was absolutely something to remember. Unfortunately everything has to come to an end, including my internship and my time in Oxford. It was a brilliant experience in which I learned a lot about science, other cultures, as well as myself of course. I wish to thank the Nora Baart Foundation for supporting me, and making it possible for me to have this experience.