



Petros Stathakos at the University of Aberdeen

“I felt for the first time like a real scientist” – Petros Stathakos

“After finishing my second year in a Neuroscience with Psychology degree at the University of Aberdeen, I was lucky enough to experience an 8-week laboratory placement under the supervision of Dr Mody, funded by the Biochemical Society. When Dr Mody told me that my application was successful, I was really pleased but not fully able to realize how extremely beneficial this experience could be. I am grateful to Biochemical Society for giving me the opportunity to work in an active laboratory, and gain knowledge and experience that could only be gained by practice.

During my degree, I have built up a scientific interest in obesity, Type 2 diabetes and their effects on the body’s biochemistry and nervous system functions. The project I was involved was the delineation of the role of protein tyrosine phosphatase 1B (PTP1B) in endoplasmic reticulum (ER) stress in liver and adipose tissue, part of a bigger project where liver- and adipose-PTP1B-deleted mice are used to investigate the role of PTP1B in ER stress and insulin resistance. In other words, we examined the role of PTP1B in the ER stress response, by silencing PTP1B, using small interfering RNA (siRNA), in human hepatic cells.

Unfortunately, 8 weeks were not enough time to present adequate results, but in terms of personal experience gained, these few weeks were tremendous! First of all, I feel much more confident in the laboratory. I had the opportunity to practise my techniques and to apply my knowledge acquired from the taught

lectures, as well as to learn new methods and to get involved with the latest technology. Additionally, I realize the importance of being a member of a laboratory team. All the time, someone was next to me to answer a question, to explain a procedure, to motivate me when I was mistaken and advising me with a new idea. Moreover, step by step, I earned the trust of my supervisor and the team, and they treated me as an equal member by discussing my ideas and my opinions. Finally, when I had my own results and had been asked to present them in the weekly lab meeting, the excitement was something indescribable! I felt for the first time like a real scientist, very proud and my efforts were vindicated, an unprecedented feeling that is definitely the highlight of this experience. Until then, research was only one of my many career aspirations. Now, after finishing this studentship, I feel that my future belongs to research.”

Nimesh Mody said about having Petros in the lab for the summer “Petros did really well in the lab, building on the short volunteer experience he gained last year. Unfortunately, experiments did not go to plan, so there was much disappointment and not enough time to troubleshoot the problems thoroughly. However, Petros gained a real insight into the ups and downs of daily laboratory research and how to communicate this to his colleagues using PowerPoint presentations” ■

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