

I am a postdoctoral researcher working on gene expression in the Sir William Dunn School of Pathology at the University of Oxford in Shona Murphy's laboratory. Thanks to a JSPS short-term post-doctoral fellowship, I was able to join the laboratory of Dr Yuki Yamaguchi in Graduate School of Bioscience and Biotechnology at the Tokyo Institute of Technology for 3 months. The Yamaguchi/Handa laboratories are pioneers in the field of transcription. They have identified and characterised two proteins, NELF and DSIF, that play key roles in the process of RNA polymerase II pausing during transcription. This process is crucial for proper gene expression and maintenance of body homeostasis. Using a common technique in the Murphy laboratory, I identified a new factor involved in this mechanism. To better understand the role of this factor, *in vitro* studies (like those performed for NELF and DSIF) were required. Joining the Yamaguchi laboratory was clearly the best way to perform this work. Indeed, in the Yamaguchi laboratory I had access to the best expertise I could expect and all the tools I needed to perform successful experiments. Within 3 months, I obtained new data, which together with my previous work will allow submission of my study to a high impact scientific journal. I have also learnt and developed my skills under the guidance of my host laboratory to be able to carry out my own *in vitro* experiments in Oxford. Beyond reaching my primary target of obtaining results and learning specific techniques, I was introduced to a different way of thinking and doing science in Japan. My experience there has definitely affected my way of designing protocols and analysing results. I would be delighted to go back there again in the future.

One of the most important factors making my experience a success was the kindness of the people I met in the laboratory. Knowing that I could always ask for help and that I could rely on my colleagues to support me in an environment that was often strange to me made my time there very pleasant. During my stay, I found myself in many situations where I needed advice (for example, how to behave in specific situations) or help for work (for example where to find a reagent) or for everyday life (for example, how to find my way on the train) and I have always received the best advice and help from my colleagues. So if there is a tip I could give to new fellows, it is: "choose your host laboratory carefully, because it is as important who you are with just as much as where you are".

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