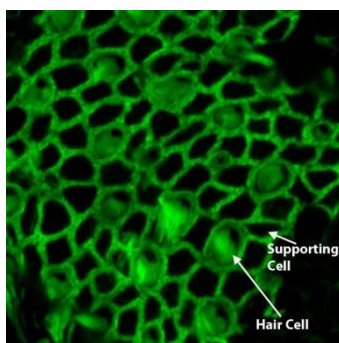


Name of Institution: RIKEN Center for Developmental Biology
Department: Sensory Development
Host: Dr. Raj Ladher

I was lucky enough to receive a JSPS short-term fellowship, which allowed me to come to the RIKEN CDB in Kobe, Japan, for one year. I spent my time characterizing the expression and function of an extracellular sulfatase, called Sulf1, in the mouse and chicken inner ear. Prior to the start of my fellowship, I had some preliminary data that suggested Sulf1 was expressed in some interesting regions of the chicken inner ear, and I was able to expand on this data during my time in Japan to build a more comprehensive picture of its expression. Coming to a laboratory in which both chick and mouse sensory biology is studied enabled me to learn about mammalian inner ear biology, and to expand my original research plan to include an analysis of Sulf1 expression in a mammalian inner ear system too. As a result I also have an ongoing collaboration with a group from Tsukuba investigating the effect of Sulf1 knockdown on mouse inner ear morphology.

The RIKEN CDB was an excellent place to conduct my research. It houses state of the art research equipment, and has a large, friendly, and vibrant community of developmental biologists. This was really important for me, especially as I was living abroad in a country where I didn't speak the language for the first time. It made settling into the research environment really easy, and this in turn helped me to settle into general life in Japan.

As far as living in Japan goes, I have had nothing but positive experiences and would recommend it to anyone. Japanese people are extremely polite and friendly, and Kobe is a beautiful city in which to live. I would strongly advise someone coming to Japan to research the availability of language lessons. Kobe City provides free language lessons for all levels, including beginners, and these were extremely helpful in getting my Japanese up to speed.



Confocal image of a vestibular sensory Epithelia of the mouse inner ear



RIKEN CDB futsal team