

Personal reflection – S Richards

In June/July 2017 I had the privilege to spend six weeks in the Molecular Genetics Laboratory at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Centre (CCHMC). This lab is one of the largest and most specialised molecular genetics laboratories in the United States of America. During my time in the laboratory, I was able to gain hands-on, practical experience with establishing and optimising a PCR based assay to evaluate X chromosome inactivation, and to subsequently use this assay to analyse a patient DNA sample to evaluate the possibility of altered X chromosome gene expression. Although the results of this analysis were normal, the opportunity to spend time at CCHMC enabled me to establish strong international links with leaders in the field of primary immunodeficiency genetics, expand my knowledge of molecular based assays including assay optimisation, and to broaden my general molecular genetics exposure, all of which will be invaluable to my ongoing practice as an immunopathologist. Perhaps more importantly, I had the opportunity to learn from exceptional teachers, from the director of the department, to bioinformatics staff and junior scientific staff. The generosity of all the CCHMC staff with their time and expertise was truly invaluable. And last but not least, I was fortunate enough to be in the USA during 4th July celebrations and spent a fabulous night learning how to play 'corn hole', watching backyard fireworks and of course, eating BBQ. Thank you to the RCPA Foundation for providing me with this wonderful opportunity.

