

Field Report



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I

CANCER CENTER

Bachelor's Program
"Medical and Pharmaceutical Biotechnology"

By
Ricarda Aschauer

1. General impression

During my stay in Honolulu at the University of Hawaii Cancer Center I was able to gain much expertise, overall in practical applications. Nevertheless, I also have to criticize the circumstances I had to cope with. Since a lot of employees left the laboratory group of James Turkson, PhD, who was my supervisor, everything seemed to be quite chaotic and I was a little bit neglected in the beginning. However, that did change later and my supervisor James Turkson, PhD and I worked closely together. Though in my opinion, it would have been better to have a supervisor who actively works within the laboratory. In a nutshell one can say, the UH Cancer Center is a really great place for an intern, because it is very modern and well equipped. But the group leaders or/and the supervisors should be better prepared when hiring an intern.

2. The University of Hawaii Cancer Center

Established in 1981 the UH Cancer Center has been the only National Cancer Institute-designated center in the Pacific so far. The mission of the institute is to reduce the misery of cancer over all by firm research and patient care. Further, its emphasis lies on the unique ethnic, cultural and environmental characteristics of Hawaii and the Pacific. The building which is located in Downtown Honolulu (701 Ilalo Street, HI 96813) offers the required facilities to more than 100 cancer research projects in four interdisciplinary programs. It is part of the University of Hawaii. ¹

The department Natural Products and Experimental Therapeutics, aims to develop new anti-cancer drugs by observing signal transduction and pathways of apoptosis mainly. Further, the major target is STAT3 and the goal is to find small-molecule inhibitors for that protein, which is also the part where I am participating in. There are also other fields of interest in this laboratory, which are related to that topic. Other drug targets being observed here are Src and Jak tyrosine kinases.

Another issue covered by the research group of James Turkson, PhD is investigating the signal integration among the epidermal growth factor, Src and STAT3 as well as its role in the promotion of the phenotypes characteristic for ovarian and pancreatic cancer. ²³⁴

My overall impression of the UH Cancer Center is very good. It is an up to date institution, which employs specialists from all over the world.

3. Contacts within the host institution

The people I was mainly involved with were James Turkson, PhD, the group leader, Peibin Yue, PhD a postdoc employee and Tammy J. Harrison, who is the administrative assistant. As mentioned before a lot of people left the UH Cancer Center during and before my stay, due to the high living costs in Hawaii. Therefore, it was hard to get to know many people, most of all people of my own age, since there were only the summer interns that left already in August. However, there are many leisure time activities one can take place in, including Ping Pong, Yoga, Hula classes and so on. But the problem is those activities are mostly suited to benefit the administrative personnel because of the timetable the classes are scheduled.

4. Recommendations

I would recommend the UH Cancer Center to other students, because it is a good opportunity to learn how research is carried out in far different parts of the world compared to Europe. But I would also advice anyone interested, to ask about the situation within the laboratory group first. Since many applicants will have a short telephone interview like I did, it should be easy to find out how many people are currently employed. Unfortunately, I did not think of the possibility that the research group could be understaffed or undergoing such a change during my stay, but now that I know about it, it is quite an important thing to ask.

5. Contact email

- ricarda.aschauer@gmail.com
- ricarda.aschauer@imc-krems.eu

6. References

1. www.uhcancercenter.org. 2016 [accessed 2016 Jul 9]:www.uhcancercenter.org
<http://www.uhcancercenter.org>
2. Directory, James Turkson, PhD. 2016.

3. Discussion with James Turkson, PhD. 2016.

4. Discussion with Gabriella Miklossy, PhD. 2016.