

# Field report

Department of Rheumatology, Immunology and Allergy  
Brigham and Women's Hospital – Harvard Medical School  
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## General impression of your research stay abroad

There's no better way to learn science than by practicing science. Under the guidance of an extremely competent and experienced supervisor and his highly skilled team, I was able to achieve my goal of successfully conducting an independent research project over the period of one year. My project was part of a greater research study, thus provided a much deeper experience and profound hands-on lab skills, which are difficult to find in a university seminar, but indispensable prerequisites for a prosperous future in research. Not only did my research stay abroad opened my eyes to truly understanding the key principle and the many nuances of research, but also benefited me to pick up on how to form conclusions and my own further hypotheses. In fact, I could expand on strategies in planning, organization, data interpretation, absorbing information, raising questions, using creativity, and also being tenacious. While I had the possibility to attend seminars and conferences, I was involved in work-in-progress talks and poster presentations. This decisively helped me to develop professional documentation and communication skills, which will be most valuable to my future career trajectory. Furthermore, I got engaged in writing a review publication. Related literature research and writing work helped me to better understand previously published works and, more importantly, to learn how to balance collaborative and my individual work. Finally, the mentorship provided by my supervisor equipped me with numerous edges, useful in any workplace environment, to successfully develop a plan, follow it, and adapt to arising challenges by reflecting on methodological issues.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to the Austrian Marshall Plan Foundation for this unique opportunity to meaningfully contribute to the research of one of the top-tier research organizations in the world.

## Quality of the host institution

Brigham and Women's Hospital – Harvard Medical School is located in Longwood, Medical and Academic Area of Boston. I was listed as "Sponsored Staff Research Trainee – Predoc", which did not allow me to attend any college courses. However, I had access to the Harvard Medical School library and could attend research seminars, conferences, research retreats, and many more affiliated with the research center of Brigham.

The supervision during the internship was very structured. My supervisor and his motivated team offered the highest degree of expertise and trained me to ultimately develop the skills needed for preparing my experiments thoroughly and successfully. Luckily, resources did not set a limit to my work. I was always met at the eye level and got to work independently on my project, where I could arrange my work schedule myself. This framework immensely promoted my autonomy and decision-making skills. Certainly, the internship provided me with the needed support for gradually becoming familiar with independently conducting research on my own.

## Contacts within the host institution, inclusion in the organization

Brigham and Women's Hospital is a teaching hospital of Harvard Medical School and conducts one of the largest hospital-based research programs worldwide. It is known for many pioneering achievements in medical science. Although the labyrinth of imposing buildings around Longwood, all connected by glass bridges, may seem intimidating at first, it harbors a friendly work atmosphere open for cooperation and steady interchange of ideas.

The Department of Rheumatology, Immunology and Allergy consists of several laboratories located on two floors of the Hale Research Building, located in Longwood Medical and Academic Area in Boston, MA. It is led by Paul J. Anderson, MD, PhD, CAO and SVP, who works closely with lab faculty and assistant professor Pavel Ivanov, PhD. Both are extremely knowledgeable, always eager to provide guidance to employees with questions, and show no restraint in helping to optimize protocols. Moreover, open lab or office space as well as the coffee room allows easy networking with the most diverse pool of colleagues from all around the world.

There is an onboarding process, where it is easy to connect with other incoming international employees or trainees. In addition, I could share experiences with peers and other remarkable people while attending research seminars, conferences, research retreats, and many more affiliated with the research center of Brigham.

## Recommendations for future Marshall Plan students and fellows

I strongly recommend to take the courageous step and spend a year overseas. Certainly, it is worth the effort applying for the Marshall Plan Scholarship, which offers exceptional financial support for a life-changing experience. Boston/ Cambridge is an expensive city. Many apartments are crappy given the high per capita ratio of students, who keep quality low and prices high. Definitely, start your apartment hunt in good time and first check out the room/ area/ public transportation/ crime/ etc. before signing a lease. Try reaching out to your future lab mates, they usually can give good advice. The rental market is extremely competitive. However, many institutions have online forums where employees/ interns (who are about to leave) list their apartments so you can take over their lease/ room.