Lab Spotlight: Doulatov Lab

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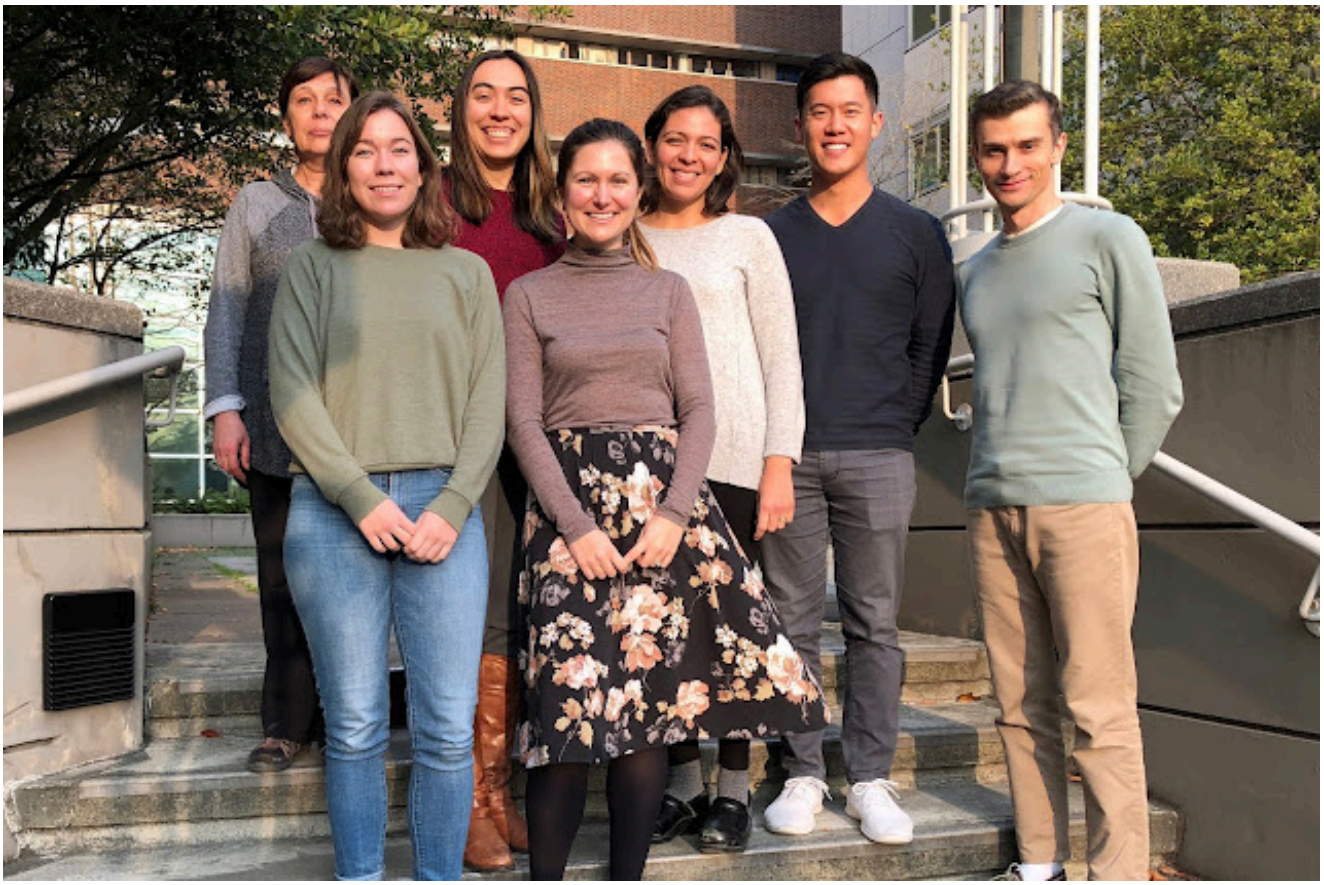

How long have you had your lab?
It has been just over two years since I started at the University of Washington.

How many members make up your lab? Students/postdocs?
Currently, our group consists of two postdocs, a student, a research scientist, an undergraduate, and a lab manager.

What is the major research theme of your lab?
We use primary human stem cells and pluripotent stem cells to understand basic biology of hematopoiesis, blood development, and disease.

What is the most exciting project in your lab right now?
Our most exciting projects uses patient iPS cells to model neoplasia, such as myelodysplastic syndromes and leukemias. Existing mouse or cell line models do not recapitulate many of the features of human disease. So we are differentiating iPS into hematopoietic progenitors and recapitulating abnormal differentiation. The challenge with iPS is educating them to engraft, which is also a problem we are also focusing on.

What's your best approach to mentoring students in the lab?
I try to check in with all of my trainees every day. There might be things on their mind but they might not want to go and bother the PI in the office. So the key is making yourself available to discuss any issues or ideas they have. These interactions are very organic, and I prefer that to the more structured meetings. It's also the part of my day I enjoy the most.

What's the biggest accomplishment your lab has had recently?
We recently received the NIH Director's New Innovator award. This is a pretty big deal because it allows us to focus on doing the most exciting science. It is meant to support projects that are "high risk", but in my opinion science that is worth doing is always high risk.

What has been your greatest challenge in managing your lab?
I think that being a good mentor is hard. It is a fine balance of many things. You have to enable your trainees to be successful, which is a learning process for new PIs. As you have less and less time to spend in the lab, you have to develop a strong cadre of students who will take the lead.

What advice do you have for new investigators just opening their lab?
Don't be afraid to start something totally new. Take advantage of the opportunities at your new institution and colleagues to start productive collaborations.

What was the most exciting part about starting your new lab?
For me it was the freedom to do pursue my best ideas. Setting the directions and priorities that you are really excited about.

Does your lab attend the ISEH annual meeting?
I always attend ISEH meetings. As the projects in the lab mature over the next few years, we will have more trainees attending the meeting.

What is the most beneficial aspect of ISEH membership for your lab?
ISEH meeting is the best forum to interact with closest colleagues while learning about the latest advances in our field.

How do members of your lab celebrate accomplishments?
Lab lunch or potluck.

Does your lab have any fun traditions?
Being outside and enjoying the Pacific Northwest.

Each month, Simply Blood spotlights a lab focused on the research of basic hematology, immunology, stem cell research, cell and gene therapy, and other related aspects. Get to know these different labs around the world! This month, we are featuring the Doulatov Lab at the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington (USA).