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Lab Spotlight: Laurenti Lab



- October 06, 2023



The Laurenti Lab, at Wellcome Cambridge Stem Cell Institute, Cambridge, UK

Each month, Simply Blood spotlights a lab contributing to the fields of hematology, immunology, stem cell research, cell and gene therapies, and more. Get to know groups doing cutting edge research from around the world! This month, we are featuring the Laurenti Lab which is based out of the Cambridge Stem Cell Institute, at the University of Cambridge in the UK (<https://www.stemcells.cam.ac.uk/people/pi/laurenti>).

How long have you had your lab? And how many members make up your lab?

I have started my group in September 2014, and currently our group is composed of seven people. Three postdocs, two PhD students and one research assistant, in addition to several students shared between our group and other research groups including; one bioinformatician and two postdocs.

What is the major research theme of your lab?

Our lab is interested in deciphering human haematopoiesis across the lifetime, ideally at single cell resolution.

What is the most exciting project in your lab right now?

We are very excited about the novel ways that we can use to quantify stem cell function during normal and stress-induced haematopoiesis, in ageing and inflammation. These include new single cell epigenetics technologies, different ways of performing clonal tracking in addition to many new options to maintain and/or expand the haematopoietic stem cells in vitro.

What is your approach to mentoring students in this lab?

I enjoy mentoring students and approach each student differently. It all depends on the type of scientist they are and what are their needs. I believe establishing a relationship of transparency and trust is very important in mentoring students.

What is your lab's most recent accomplishment?

Thanks to everyone we have received some major grants including an ERC. In addition, our lab members were able to develop expertise in technologies new to our lab including spectral flow cytometry and single cell multiome analysis. But in the end, it is often the everyday seemingly smaller achievements that are the most important.

What facilities or equipment does your lab absolutely depend on?

Flow cytometry, sequencing and primary samples.

Does your lab attend the ISEH Annual Meeting?

Yes, there is always at least one person from the lab, who can tell everyone else about the exciting science.

What is the most beneficial aspect of ISEH membership for your lab?

Apart from the annual meeting, the online webinars and activities are extremely useful. We had one of our students attending the career fair last year.

How do members of your lab celebrate accomplishments?

Lots of cake and a "a little bit of bubbly". I keep all the bottles with a reminder of the occasion and the

signatures of those who contributed. It's a great way to have memories of our accomplishments.

Does your lab have any fun traditions?

Birthdays, cakes, going out for dinners and our lab retreat once a year.

What is the key to running a successful lab?

I believe the key is listening to your people, provide them with guidance and mentorship. Collaboration is really important, it makes you more productive and it's often more fun. Keep the excitement on and enjoy the science!

What has been your greatest challenge in managing your lab?

Running the lab during COVID was tough. My daughter was 1.5 years old at the time of the first lockdown. Parenting and running a lab with no support other than my wonderful husband who had to juggle the same issues was not easy. We also had no primary samples for more than one and a half year. For a lab working exclusively on human cells, that is definitely disruptive! But beyond pandemics, everyone in a team will have some life events sooner or later. Change and disruptions are part of life so I try to keep an open and flexible mind, go with the flow, and remember that with challenge most often come new and exciting opportunities.

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