

The Catalan welcome was out in full force when I arrived at Sant Pau for my 2 week stay. My visit came as the perfect break from the dreary beginnings of Irish to the sunshine of Barcelona. The purpose of my visit however was not to escape Seasonal Affective Disorder, but to become au fait with the laboratory skills required for one of the projects of my PhD. This opportunity was possible thanks to the generous invitation of the team at the Institut Research de Sant Pau (Dr Nuria Puig Grifol, Dr Sonia Benitez Gonzalez and Dr Pol Camps Renon) and the ESO Department to Department Visit Grant.



As a clinician, this was my first foray into lab work and experiments since secondary school. Any unease was quickly banished by the expert guidance I received from the staff in Sant Pau. I was adopted under the wing of the wonderful research lab team and guided step-by-step through each process of the ELISA technique and the analysis of results. I was then provided with the opportunity to complete an experiment all by myself which I saw as a real achievement in my short visit. Following this positive experience, I feel well prepared to begin my lab work in Dublin, and I am very grateful to the team for their guidance.

Whilst the majority of my trip was focused on learning, I did have opportunity to sample Barcelona's sights in the evenings, both on my days off, and from the lab which has an impressive view of the Sagrada Familia. Highlights included a complementary visit to the Recinte Modernista de Sant Pau, the old Hospital Sant Pau which has been converted into museum which is considered a masterpiece of Catalan Modernism architecture. No trip to Barcelona is complete without seeing Antoni Gaudí's work, and visits to La Pedrera and Cas Batlló were also possible during my time. The cultural educational opportunities did not stop there, as I learnt about La Castanyera, Tió de Nadal and got to eat my fair share of tapas!

I will remember my time in Barcelona fondly, and I am very grateful to ESO for the opportunity to learn not just about ELISA, but about the great work the team in Sant Pau do, and about Catalan culture. I could not have asked for a better experience, and a lot of this is down to Nuria, Sonia, Pol and their team for being so welcoming and understanding.

