



**Initial Training Network** - Developing innovative (bio)artificial devices for kidney & liver disease treatment

## Interview with **Michele FEDECOSTANTE**

*PhD student at Radboud University Medical Centre*

The Netherlands



“I am from Italy, specifically from a little town under the province of Ancona. That town has always been too small for me so I decided to go to the Bologna University and start with the science world. Specifically I studied Biotechnology as a Bachelor and Medical Biotechnology as a Master degree. Step by step I reached the very end of my studies and I was already feeling the need to go abroad and expand my knowledge, and here is when the BIOART project came in, and I was ready for it!”

**W**elcome in the BIOART project Michele. What is your PhD project about? What objectives do you have to reach?

My PhD is about the development of a bioartificial kidney using human proximal tubule epithelial cell lines. In details, the project deals with cells seeding inside hollow fibre membranes, normally used in hemo-dialysis, in order to develop a device which can lead to uremic toxins and excess body fluids removal from end stage renal diseases patients, who cannot do that anymore.

**W**hat is the best thing about undertaking a PhD? How challenging is it?

Definitely, the freedom to build your professional personality by taking different courses; participating to congresses; exchanging informations with colleagues and being independent. All those things will build up a great scientific researcher. The real challenge is to follow your ideas, of course you have to have some. It's not easy, but whoever said life was easy?!

**Y**ou participated in BIOART's meeting and training sessions in January 2014. What did you learn there?

For me it was the first Network meeting in which I could finally get to know all the BIOART fellows. I found the meeting really interesting scientifically speaking, because it was all about renal structures/function and pharmacology. During the different days I got



really enthusiastic and involved into the project, as I had just started in December 2013. After the meeting, I also felt a lot of energy to get back to my work with new ideas.

### **Did you attend any other workshop or conference since January?**

Yes, sort of. I attended the Radboud University Phd retreat, which is a two-day congress involving all the PhD students from the university. It was a good opportunity to show my project to other students. The main goal of the congress was to put together all the students from different departments, without any project leader/supervisor, in order to have an atmosphere less formal but at the same time open for discussion and suggestions.

Apart from that, I will attend the *New Frontiers in Regenerative Medicine* symposium in Nijmegen in October.

### **Secondments are planned for all BIOART's PhD students and post-doc researchers. You went to Excorlab in May 2014. What was the point of the visit and what did you learn there?**

The experience was really great and helpful. All the people from the company were really nice and patient. Everything went smoothly and was well planned. I have to say that if everything in my project went as it did in ExcorLab I may probably finish my PhD tomorrow. Technically speaking, during those 3 days I saw what I was expecting to see, and I got back to the Netherlands with new ideas. I also have to mention that it was a nice experience also thanks to the presence of my colleague from Twente University; we enjoyed working together and enjoyed Obernburg.

### **What is appealing to you in being a researcher?**

When I say "I am a researcher", people usually ask me "What are you searching for then?!". It's funny to see how I can depict myself as a researcher but how complicated it is to explain in only one sentence. It is a multi-faceted job, one day you can spend the whole day running through the lab and the day after you might be spending it writing and reading. That's what I like about this job, I never get bored and it is highly challenging.

### **Do you have any plans after completing the PhD?**

Not really, I am trying to focus on the coming years in order to see what I would really like to do next. Academia vs. Company? I still need to choose.

### **Thanks for answering my questions Michele, and all the best for your PhD!**

#### **BIOART in brief**

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