
EMBO WORKSHOP: *GENE REGULATORY MECHANISMS IN NEURAL FATE DECISIONS*

07 - 10TH OF SEPTEMBER, ALICANTE, SPAIN

The EMBO workshop “Gene regulatory mechanisms in neural fate decisions” covered many different research areas in the field of neurobiology across four days in a beautiful hotel in San Jose, Alicante. Thanks to the support from the GSCN, I had the chance to listen to many fantastic talks from epigenetics to evolution and learned about novel approaches that will drive new discoveries in the field. One of the main topics were brain organoids to model developmental and neurological diseases, to understand embryonic development, but also to understand species differences of brain development and evolution. Many talks focused on scRNAseq as a tool to assess heterogeneity and construct cell atlases (just to name a few applications). As I am about to analyze the scRNAseq data set from my own research, this was a great opportunity to talk to experts in the field and receive their input and advice.

John Rubenstein gave a nice overview about how different transcription factors interplay to establish cell types during development and Sebastian Jessberger talked about novel live imaging approaches to trace cells in the mouse dentate gyrus. This was of particular interest to me, as our lab also focuses on stem cells of the dentate gyrus and their regulation. Another interesting aspect of the conference were the various talks that focused on cell cycle length and how it influences cell states as well as symmetric vs asymmetric division. Especially the talks about how signaling mechanism control neurogenesis speed and the role of transcription factor in this process were fascinating. I learned many new and exciting things which will help me to interpret my own research. Early career researchers presented their (unpublished) work in short presentations selected from abstracts. As the presenters were very approachable, I had the possibility to engage with them afterwards.

My personal highlights were the poster sessions and the networking opportunities. I presented and discussed my work with established researchers in the field and had the impression that my findings were well received. I obtained valuable inputs and good feedback from many different people at different stage of their career. Poster sessions and coffee breaks were also a great opportunity to meet new people at this conference and I enjoyed the interactions and the scientific exchange. It was exciting to catch up with friends I made during another conference last year, since we did not know that we were all attending this conference.

In summary, this conference was a great opportunity for me to present my project, receive scientific input and pitch some new ideas, which may lead to new collaborations. The scientific exchange contributed to both my personal and professional development. I can highly recommend to early career scientist to attend small and specialized conferences; you get to hear about the newest developments in your field from different aspects and there are many possibilities to interact with well-known scientists and your peers, which fosters inspiration and collaboration. Thanks again to the GSCN for supporting my attendance at this conference.