Education at URMC – Student Perspectives

Name: Pui Yee (Elaina) Chan

Hometown: Staten Island, NY

Undergraduate Degree: B.A. in Chemistry with a concentration in Biochemistry from SUNY New Paltz

Graduate Degree: PhD in Pharmacology

Areas of Interest: the non-canonical regulation of heterotrimeric G protein signal transduction.

Background Information
I grew up in Hong Kong and immigrated to the United States when I was ten years old. I have one older sister, Hau Yee and she is a successful licensed CPA working in a Tax accounting firm in Manhattan, NY. I went to Tottenville High School on Staten Island, NY where the school had provided numerous programs for students to explore different potential career paths. I had an opportunity to do a summer internship at an architecture firm and after this experience, I thought to become an architect. However, this passion did not last too long and I decided to pursue something else. When I went to SUNY New Paltz for my undergraduate study, my passion in chemistry grew after one summer research experience. Since then, I had opportunities to attend national and regional conferences to present my work. I am very grateful to my research advisor at SUNY New Paltz, Dr. Preeti Dhar for her compassion, encouragement and support. A summer research program for undergraduates funded by the National Science Foundation also opened my eyes and interests in biomedical science. Aside from academic, I am also involved in many extracurricular activities, such as volleyball, hiking, and musicals.
Why did you choose The University of Rochester Medical Center?
I chose The University of Rochester Medical Center because of reputation, its commitment to funding many projects that will improve scientific research and the faculty’s expertise from various backgrounds in science.

Tell us about your program
The Department of Pharmacology and Physiology provides training in many different research areas. Because of this, getting advice from experts in these research areas is easier. This definitely helps my research progress and training. Also, Journal clubs in various fields of research are offered and students/postdocs/faculty are gathered to discuss current scientific research in an informal setting. Our program also offers seminar series where the faculty or graduate students invite scientists in related research areas to exchange scientific knowledge.

What are your career aspirations?
I look forward to using the fundamental science research skills, analytical and critical thinking skills I’ve learned in my graduate studies to connect my training in basic science to clinical research. I would like to pursue a career in clinical research and development. I would like to find treatment to osteoporosis, because this disease has a higher risk to Asian women.

What are some of the things you have learned since you came to Rochester?
I have learned to work as an independent researcher and adapt to changes quickly. I have also learned research does not always go to the direction you anticipate, so keep up, work hard and work smart! Besides lab, definitely find and do something that is outside of the lab (i.e. running, playing tennis, cooking). Finding that balance is very important.

Any Advice for perspective students?
Take advantage of the vast research areas and explore what suits you. Don’t be afraid to talk to current graduate students and faculty about the research that’s going on in their lab. This way, you will get to know some people and at the same time find out if their research interests you. After all, you want to find a lab not only where the research interests you, but also one you feel comfortable in. Candidates wanting to learn more can contact Pui Yee at PuiYee_Ch@urmc.rochester.edu.