

> IUBMB TI – Your Monthly Minutes

Your favorite monthly newsletter



Welcome back, yet again!

This time we will get to know Marta Orłowska! She will share her experiences from her journey through quite various research fields. We will also address the mental aspects of research, especially within your PhD. And now it is time you make up your own mind:

> *Who Marta is*

Born in
Poland

–

About to finish her
PhD



A travel junkie,
interested in
new cultures

–

Loves to discover
new food and
cook herself



Although I am born in Poland, I moved to the UK for my studies. There, I did my Bachelors in Microbiology & Biotechnology and my Honors. Afterwards I moved to Brisbane for my PhD, especially since the Brexit was endangering funding for many labs.



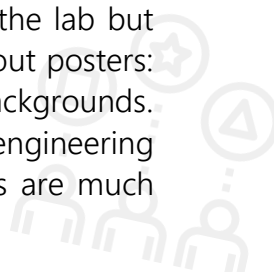
In my PhD I indeed worked on multiple topics. I started focusing on how circadian rhythms might affect pathologies such as heart attacks. However, due to some limitations of the model system, I switched over to characterizing how hormones and metabolites might influence these diseases.



Yes, I have been working in many research areas. Apart from my studies, I additionally spend some time working on microfluidics in Adelaide. To my mind, fields like chemistry, biology, or physics are similar enough that one can transfer skills pretty well. Of course, other things like your way of thinking creatively vs focused have to adapt.

Marta, you have seen many fields and research topics, have you had the impression that the attitude and mindset of people differed?

Oh well, I would say so. That certainly also depends on the person and the lab but overall, in different fields the people got different preferences. Talking about posters: while Biologists love color – chemists like boxed, clean, neat and white backgrounds. Better do not try the wrong design :D. Similarly, people with an engineering background are more likely to think first and then do, while in Chemists are much more into trying things out right away.



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It is your path

I always chased skills instead of topics. I knew I could assemble them to work on the final project I would have in mind. Regarding your research, your supervisor will play an essential role in motivating and guiding you. I would advise to follow your results instead of your plan – chase what seems to be cool and unexpected. In contrast to the master thesis, in your PhD you have enough time to stumble upon snippets and put them together!



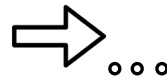
An idea for you

There are so many fascinating and inspiring methods published these days! Just have a look at [wildDISCO](#) (*here the [pre-print](#) and [twitter](#)*). They use 3D imaging of solvent-cleared organs to actually label an entire mouse with normal antibodies. At the end you have fluorescent signals from the entire body. Or maybe you are more interested in [microscopy-like tissue analysis involving more than 30 antibodies?](#)



Chewing on thoughts

I am sometimes like a chewing cow, chewing on what is in my mind. I take thoughts and then ponder on them for quite a while. That is certainly very helpful for scientific questions, but less helpful for emotional stuff. Lingering for so long with these emotions and doubts can be really dragging. Having some distance to yourself is sometimes much easier and can help you quite a lot to get through the rough times of a PhD.



Our Future

To my mind, meeting in person would be great to say the least. We could find out more about one another, foster the flow of ideas and collaborate to leverage all of our skills. I really think that when you have met in person you are more likely to just drop a message to one another. Also, having a section on our website where our audience can submit ideas could be very useful.

> A crucial challenge

The PhD makes you or breaks you. Either you enjoy how science is done these days staying in academia or you leave for the industry. At some point, you might become somewhat numb to only focus on your lab-work. That can be pretty helpful to get through these phases where nothing works out. The PhD can be a lonely journey from time to time. Very few people can help you since they have their own projects. *I think Marta is completely right about that. However, I feel that this kind of numbness poses a vicious risk for many students. Communicating this common menace is as essential as making people aware that it is their choice what to endure and how to do so.*

Another thought-provoking minute –



Trainee Initiative

– Enjoy your journey all the way!