

> IUBMB TI – Your Monthly Minutes

Your favorite monthly newsletter



Hello to everyone out there!

It is time to hear from Cathy Cozma. We will address the myth of normal as well as some other aspects of education and mental well-being. Especially this time, refraining from mentioning my personal opinion was a great training in writing the minutes! Wish you an engaging read:

> *Who Cathy is*

Originally from
Romania

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Working on her
master thesis



Quite sporty –
from gymnastics
to parkour

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Member of the
Canadian CSMB



I have an Honours Specialization in Biochemistry and Cancer Biology from the University of Western Ontario. I currently study at the University of British Columbia and am pursuing a Masters in Interdisciplinary Oncology.



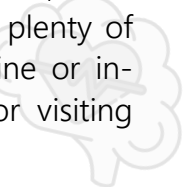
Our lab is focused on finding druggable DNA damage repair (DDR) proteins as a synthetic lethal cancer therapeutic strategy. We do this by engineering DDR protein variant libraries and screening for dominant negative variants that have the potential to become “trapped” onto DNA. These ‘trapped’ DDR variants allow DNA lesions to persist by limiting the accessibility of redundant repair pathways.



Vancouver has no shortage of beautiful trails and mountains. On weekends with good weather, I love going hiking and enjoy being out in nature. In my spare time, I also dabble in parkour although I am afraid of heights :D I’m always amazed and motivated seeing others having fun and the amazing tricks they perform!

Cathy, you know I am very much into anything that connects science and sustainability. The UBC is really invested in this topic, are they not?

Although I’m not familiar with the various environmental initiatives undertaken, I can speak to the value placed on graduate students mental health. There are plenty of resources one can access to get help - whether this be through an online or in-person format. At the BC Cancer Research Center we have a counsellor visiting weekly.



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The Myth of normal

I recently read a book titled “The myth of normal”. There was much discussion about the amount of stress in our lives. Nowadays, I try and remind myself that there is no normal that applies to everyone and it’s important to take a step back from the constant stress of failed experiments and challenging personal lives to take care of ourselves. One does not have to hit a certain threshold before a problem is worth addressing.



Rethinking Publishing

In my opinion, the mere number of publications you have is not a sensible readout for the value of your contribution to the scientific field. Rather, I believe more emphasis could be placed on the value your conclusions provide in furthering any given area of science and our understanding of biology. In particular, with reference to complex disease processes or the generation of creative therapeutic approaches!



Leveraging connection

It’s awesome that the IUBMB TI is able to stay connected through our monthly minutes and the various events each region hosts. I also love the diversity of the projects we can work on and how inclusive events are. In the future, I think we can continue to leverage the unique scientific background of each trainee and share tips and tricks with each other. Troubleshooting experiments as a group is much more helpful than just reading about it!



Our Future

As a newcomer to the IUBMB TI, I propose we implement an onboarding system for those joining the TI in leadership positions. This may be in the form of appointed mentors or simply a brief written orientation guidebook. Looking forward, I hope we can organize an event focused on exploring unconventional career paths beyond academia and industry. These can include consulting, patent officers, legal advisors and venture capitalist work.

> *Building character*

Our current university education lacks opportunities to explore non-academic pursuits. This can include joining clubs or initiatives that are entirely unrelated to your studies. Implementing a four-day work week could be helpful in exploring such opportunities. Overall, this would allow students to become well-rounded individuals with diverse life experiences and interests beyond their very narrow field of study.

A plethora of thoughts and ideas

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Hope you digest them well!