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Student evaluation:

Petra Sekyrová

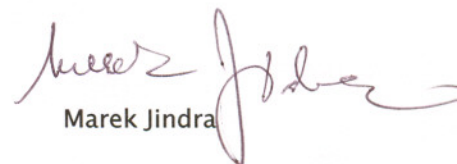
Petra is the fifth graduate student to leave my lab since I opened it ten years ago. When I look back at the five dissertation theses of these graduates, I see that the projects grow more and more demanding, both technically and intellectually. Although they yield fewer papers, these papers show increasing quality, being more complete and providing original insights into developmental biology. This has only been possible due to the effort of my talented and dedicated students including Petra, who helped me improve our standards.

Petra's project was a difficult one. The transcription factor ATF3 is an important stress- and disease-related protein, covered by several hundred papers that are based mainly on cultured mammalian cells. Yet, ATF3 has not been studied in *Drosophila*, and its role in the context of a whole developing animal is unknown. Petra's task was to utilize the *Drosophila* model to uncover potential developmental roles of ATF3. To that end, she had to perform molecular characterization of the ATF3 protein and its interactions, prepare and analyze ATF3 mutant flies, and finally conduct gain-of-function analyses based on misexpression of ATF3 in tissues of transgenic flies.

Amongst Petra's strengths are motivation, diligence, independent thinking, and ability to collaborate with others. Petra has always been friendly, communicative and conflict-free person, easy to work with and to supervise. She mastered difficult staining and confocal microscopy of pupal epidermis, which was the key to the success of her paper, now accepted in *Development*. She was patient and ready to repeat countless genetic crosses and experiments with new and new antibodies to finally get an insight into ATF3 function in the epithelial cell replacement. This part of Petra's results is what you will mainly see in her presentation today. However, this is only a fraction of her work, while lots of mutant and RNAi loss-of-function data are yet to be covered in future publications. In fact, the speed and numbers of performed experiments at some points exceeded Petra's ability to interpret the data carefully enough to make them conclusive. Particularly skipping essential controls could sometimes drive me up the wall, but I guess Petra has learned a great deal from these little mistakes. Paying attention to seeming details is extremely important in developmental biology, and this is something Petra might want to improve in her future work.

To conclude, I want to thank Petra for all her excellent work, which finally allowed us to publish a paper that I am really proud of. It is clear to me that Petra is a promising young scientist, likely to succeed in her future career as a researcher. I wish her all the best to be successful and happy in work and personal life alike.

In ČB, 26 October 2009


Marek Jindra