

## **An Interview with Dr. Diamandis**

Azza : Dr. Diamandis could you explain as to what is the purpose of this interview?

Dr. Diamandis : The objective of this interview is to give an idea to prospective graduate students as to what the ACDC Laboratory is, and why this laboratory could be a good home for performing their graduate studies.

Azza : Dr. Diamandis Could you tell us a little bit of the history of the ACDC Lab?

Dr. Diamandis : The ACDC Lab was established at the Toronto Western Hospital in 1988. Then, it was a small laboratory with 3-4 people which grew slowly, but steadily, to approximately 10 people by 1993. In 1993 I moved to Mount Sinai Hospital and the laboratory continued to grow to approximately 15-20 members by 1996-1997. About 3 years ago, in 2006, the ACDC Laboratory was relocated in a new facility on the 6<sup>th</sup> Floor at 60 Murray Street along with other investigators.

Azza : Are there any other research laboratories in this building and floor?

Dr. Diamandis : Yes, there are many other laboratories in very close vicinity to our laboratory on both the 6<sup>th</sup> floor and 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the building. These are laboratories that are part of the Samuel Lunenfeld Research Institute of Mount Sinai Hospital. The ACDC Laboratory is one of these labs. Adjacent to our laboratory there are common facilities and a large number of graduate students and Post-Doctoral fellows who work in other

laboratories. It is thus a very good place for graduate students and Post-Doctoral fellows since many other peers are in very close vicinity.

Azza : Dr. Diamandis, could you tell us a little bit as to what is the research focus of the ACDC Laboratory?

Dr. Diamandis : Of Course. Our Laboratory has traditionally worked over many years with a group of enzymes called human tissue kallikreins. Many of these enzymes were discovered in our laboratory and we have been internationally recognized in this area. More recently, we have excelled in an area called “proteomics” by using the technology of mass spectrometry. Our laboratory is now among the top labs internationally in this area of investigation. We are using mass spectrometry to discover novel biomarkers for diagnosis and monitoring of cancer and other diseases. There are also smaller programs in therapeutics and male infertility. I would recommend to prospective graduate students to go to our website and study carefully a section called “Overview of Research Activities of the Advanced Center for Detection of Cancer”. Our web address is – [www.acdclab.org](http://www.acdclab.org).

Azza : How would a graduate student get an idea on the quality of research performed at the ACDC Lab and why these research areas could be good for a prospective graduate student?

Dr. Diamandis : Our laboratory is publishing a relatively large number of papers (approximately 20-30 papers per year) in high-impact journals. There are

independent indicators of quality such as – the impact factor of journals publishing our work, the number of citations received annually and other quality indicators. Our laboratory is among the most highly cited laboratories in Canada and internationally, and was recently ranked in the top 30 proteomics laboratories internationally. I would advise prospective students and Post-Doctoral Fellows to visit our website to review our recent record of publications. They are all available online from our website under “Publications and Genebank Submissions”.

Azza : What is your philosophy for mentoring new graduate students in this laboratory?

Dr. Diamandis : The strength of this laboratory is based on the quality of the graduate students who constitute the large majority of the scientific staff. Approximately 12 graduate students are doing their MSc or PhD at any time. I am much more interested to attract PhD-oriented graduate students than MSc-oriented students. I make sure that the graduate students finish their degrees on time (according to the regulations of the Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathobiology, approximately 5 years for a PhD) and that at the end of their studies the graduate students have a good portfolio of published papers. I give ample oppourtunities to the graduate students to exercise their creativity and independence but I also provide strong background support through experienced technologists and other specialists. There are also many oppourtunities for the graduate students to learn how to review papers, to prepare grant applications, participate in

scientific meetings and present at our weekly laboratory seminars. The relatively large numbers of peers within the laboratory allows for frequent interactions between the students as well as the director of the laboratory. My door is always open and I am very flexible to accommodating new ideas that come from the graduate students.

Azza : Are there any other unique elements of the ACDC Laboratory that a prospective new student could consider?

Dr. Diamandis : Yes, the philosophy of this laboratory is to approach all new graduate students as whole human beings rather than merely workers. This means that the director pays very close attention to maintaining a pleasant and collegial environment which also promotes extra-curricular activities such as sports, music, an annual summer barbeque and other social events. The last few years we have also been shooting a special video which captures the staff of that year in a creative fashion. All in all, I promote hard work, creativity and independence but I also make sure that the students and other scientific staff are treated as human beings in a pleasant environment.

Azza : Can you summarize as to why this laboratory could be a good home for a new graduate student?

Dr. Diamandis : It is important to realize that a graduate student will likely spend a very significant amount of time in the research laboratory – between 2 -5 years. As is usually the case, graduate students and Post-Doctoral fellows spend

more time in the laboratory than in their respective homes. In this laboratory we offer outstanding space which is new, clean and with windows and individual dry seating spaces for all students. On the other hand, as I mentioned earlier, we pay a lot of attention to creating a pleasant environment and a philosophy that aims to approach every graduate student as a person, not just a pair of hands. The excellent funding of this laboratory allows for graduate students to use modern facilities and equipment and we invest funds to purchase whatever is necessary for graduate students to perform at the highest level and in an expedited fashion. We also make sure that the graduate students have the flexibility, freedom and independence to drive their research in the direction of their choice. However I should mention here that we are also very selective in accepting graduate students and that our positions are limited and very competitive.

I close by mentioning that one of the best ways to find out more about the ACDC Laboratory is to first, navigate through our website and second, speak to graduates or other students who are already in the laboratory and ask more specific questions. The laboratory is always interested to interview prospective new graduate students; an interview can be easily arranged through an email notification to me or my secretary.

Azza : Thank you Dr. Diamandis

Dr. Diamandis : My pleasure