

Obituary

Dmitry Belostotsky (September 13, 1964 – March 17, 2009)

Dmitry Belostotsky died on March 17, 2009. His passing at the young age of 44 and in the middle of a very active and productive period is a tragedy of immense proportions for his friends and colleagues as well as for his family of course.

Dmitry was born in Moscow and received his M.Sc. from the renowned Kiev State University in the Ukraine and the Institute of Molecular Genetics, and his Ph.D. from the USSR Academy of Sciences. In 1990, Dmitry received a British Council Fellowship and moved to the UK to work in the Cambridge laboratory at the John Innes Centre for Plant Science Research in Cambridge. Dmitry then spent several years (1991–1995) as a post-doctoral fellow in Rich Meagher's laboratory at the University of Georgia in Athens. Dmitry joined the faculty of the Department of Biological Sciences in The State University of New York (SUNY) at Albany in 1995. He and his wife/collaborator, Dr. Julia Chekanova, then moved in 2007 to the University of Missouri – Kansas City (UMKC), where Julia remains as a faculty member.

I first met Dima, as he was known, when I gave a seminar there perhaps seven years ago or so. Dima, I and Julia all shared an interest in the post-transcriptional regulation of gene expression. Although Dima was by training a plant person and devoted to this discipline and community, he was fascinated by the possibilities that yeast molecular genetics present. Moreover, he and Julia had recently done a very handsome piece of work, complementing the yeast polyA-binding protein (PAB) with plant PAB, which led them to propose that yeast PAB is critically involved in RNA export rather than just in its more well-accepted functions in cytoplasmic protein synthesis (published in *Current Biology* in 2001). My lab had stumbled upon a similar hypothesis, so we struck up a conversation and ultimately began to collaborate. He and Julia spent a few

months in my laboratory on a one semester sabbatical during the first months of 2005. This period cemented a friendship that lasted until his untimely death.

Dima as he was known was incredibly curious and passionate about science. His and Julia's stay in my lab and our collaboration were remarkably productive, and he was also a wonderful asset to everyone here at Brandeis. Even my circadian rhythm people benefited from his relentless questioning and enthusiasm. Dima's intelligence and memory are on display in the review article being published in this issue. It not only exhaustively covers a wide-range of recent findings, from plants as well as from yeast and mammals, but also integrates them in a number of creative ways. It is rare to find this combination of fantastic memory, intelligence and imagination.

I always thought of Dmitri as a Russian novelist masquerading as an outstanding scientist. He was interested in just about everything, from detailed experimental protocols to political philosophy. Even chess and sports were of interest. (He was a very good soccer goalie if I remember correctly, and his son André a very good chess player.) All of these assets were punctuated with a wonderful sense of humor. I remember Dima sitting and chatting with me in my office one day. He said something grammatically sophisticated, which led me to compliment him on his English. He replied, "We didn't come on the Mayflower, but we got here as soon as we could." A larger-than-life person, Dima will be missed.

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