Reflecting back on what was such a wonderful experience only makes me even more grateful for the kind contributions from the Marina Shakich Travel Award and the Travel Awards Committee.

During my time in Barcelona, I undertook a project exploring the role of astrocytes (especially tripartite synapses) in hippocampal function in health and disease (in this case, in Down Syndrome). Not only did I learn extensively about this, and acquired the set of skills required for it; but I also got a great insight into the world of scientific research, working with great professionals who further encouraged and fostered my interest for it.

The Centre for Genomic Regulation (above) is an international biomedical research institute; composed by several different laboratories, each working on different projects in an interdisciplinary manner in order to further understanding of genetic diseases. I worked in Mara Dierssen’s Systems Biology laboratory.

The first few weeks of the internship consisted of attending lab meetings, understanding the dynamics of team work in this field, learning all the relevant techniques, and researching the hypothesis. Sadly, that week the Barcelona terrorist attack occurred about 10 minutes away from the laboratory. This terrible experience only reminded us about the importance of doing meaningful work that can help society in whatever way possible throughout one’s life.

I was able to, whilst doing my work, also get involved in several other projects of a similar yet different nature and get a taste of several different experimental techniques used in a
wide variety of experiments in neuroscience. This gave me an incredible overview of the field and, even though I enjoy all of them, has given me the opportunity to now go on to explore the ones that I was most passionate about.

The experience as a whole was priceless; I have come out of it much more prepared not only at a technical level but at a personal one too. Barcelona was an incredibly vibrant and cultural city that taught me many things. I am very grateful not only to my supervisors in the lab but to the college and the award committee for their support.

I will leave you with some pictures of the city because as the saying goes: “una imagen vale mas que mil palabras”. 