

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Justin Burnett, and I am a current first-year medical student at Drexel University College of Medicine. I attended the University of Miami from the Fall of 2013 to the Spring of 2017. At the beginning of the Spring 2015 semester, I reached out to Dr. Datto to become involved in his work at The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis. I quickly became involved in several of the ongoing projects but mainly performed catwalk analysis for the first few months. Once I finished the catwalk analysis for the Probenecid study, I was invited to help Dr. Datto with the animals in the surgical suite. Dr. Datto taught me how to hold the rats, how to perform injections, and how to administer isoflurane. Dr. Datto and I worked side by side for about 10-20 hours a week over the 2015 and 2016 academic years. As I gained experience in each of the behavioral test, I transitioned to working either alone or with Hunter King, an undergraduate research assistant. Hunter and I would collect data from one test while Dr. Datto collected from another. This allowed us to collect all of the data we needed efficiently.

During the 2017 academic year, we worked on several studies simultaneously. The study I remember the most was the hypothermia study since it required 24-hour monitoring of the rat after injury. This meant Dr. Datto had to perform the surgery and then monitor the rat constantly. While other undergraduate students and I were able to help monitor the rats some nights, I noticed Dr. Datto was often left alone in the lab. I had become accustomed to Dr. Datto spending long days in the lab, leaving around 6-8 pm most days, which was nice because I usually came in every Tuesday and Thursday from 2 pm-7 pm. I couldn't count the many late afternoons where Dr. Datto and I were the only people in the surgical suite, and sometimes the 5th-floor lab as a whole.

During the 2016-17 academic year, new students joined the team. Dr. Datto seemed to enjoy training the new students. All of our projects were on track, and our team was working well together. I graduated in the spring of 2017 and stayed in contact with Hunter King and Dr. Datto about the status of our various projects. I enrolled in the Master of Biomedical Studies program at Drexel University, and during the Summer of 2018, I returned to the lab for a couple of weeks. Upon my return, I met three new students who were in charge of performing the catwalk analysis that I used to do alone. Dr. Datto asked me to review their analysis, and unfortunately, there were countless mistakes. I spent my time fixing the analysis instead of working to organize manuscripts as planned.

While I cannot comment on performance or behavior over the most recent year, I can confidently say working closely with Dr. Datto was very pleasant and informative. I knew I found a great mentor when I found out all of the students who had previously worked with him were accepted to medical school. I learned how to suture muscle, how to dissect and harvest tissue properly, how to perform transcardial perfusions, how to perform numerous behavioral tests, and the list goes on. My time working with Dr. Datto is something I look back on as one of my best professional experiences as an undergraduate student at the University of Miami. Anytime I speak with other neuroscience researchers about my undergraduate experience, they comment

on how three years of animal model research and knowledge of various behavioral tests is often the same experience as Ph.D. students. As a medical student, this experience has helped set me apart from my peers.

I hope recounting my experience with Dr. Datto has helped draw a picture of his professionalism and behavior in the lab. If there is anything else you require from me or would like to know more, I can be reached at either REDACTED or REDACTED

Sincerely,

Justin Burnett  
Drexel University College of Medicine - Class of 2023  
Email: REDACTED  
Cell: REDACTED

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin Burnett". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Justin" and last name "Burnett" clearly legible.