Imre Papp is an undergraduate student in the Faculty of Science who is researching neurodevelopmental disorders. His image titled *Shining a Light on the Adolescent Mouse Brain* is featured on the front cover of this issue.

“I am currently working towards my BSc (Honours), majoring in Neuroscience. I was originally born and lived in Komló, a town in Southwestern Hungary. I moved to Canada in 2008 and have been living in Edmonton ever since. Outside of academia, I work full time as a restaurant server, and when I’m not doing that, my favourite thing to do is spend time with my friends.

What prompted your interest in research? How did you become involved in research?

I have wanted to do research since I was a child, and this desire only grew stronger as I moved through my academic career. What really drew me in was knowing that I had the potential to make a significant impact on the world and could better the lives of people on a global scale through research. After many emails and interviews, I secured my first research position: a summer studentship that I completed in the summer of 2021. This first experience was an amazing learning opportunity to learn not only technical and theoretical lab knowledge, but also showed me where exactly my interests lie and what areas of research I am most interested in. I am currently in a different lab than I was in 2021, and am planning on staying in this lab until I finish my undergraduate degree.

Describe what excites you most about your research.

The best part about my current research is that I am involved in KBG syndrome research, which is an ultra-rare neurodevelopmental disorder with only about 500 cases known worldwide. Working on such a rare, yet fascinating disease is extremely motivating and anytime I get any sort of data it is exciting, because we are that much closer to solving the puzzle. I am both excited and extremely honoured to know that my work is not only raising awareness for KBG syndrome, but also paving the way towards a treatment and/or (possibly) cure.

Have there been any unexpected challenges or roadblocks that you have encountered in your research?

When I was entering my first lab as an eager, unexperienced undergraduate student, I was under the impression that experiments always succeed, and you can answer all your experimental questions in a matter of mere months. When confronted with multiple failed experiments, this took a toll on me as a new researcher and was quite unmotivating. I learned, over time, that this is both the blessing and the curse of science – it’s complicated and intricate, while being both exactly predictable and wholly unpredictable at once. An important lesson I learned was to not be discouraged by failed experiments, and to take them as learning opportunities to fine-tune the next trial.

Research often requires a team approach. How has working with other scientists influenced your experience in research?

A team approach has been instrumental to my success as a researcher. The importance of reading scientific papers and remaining up to date on the literature concerning your area of research is unparalleled, and a big key to success. My research has relied on a team in the entirety of its life, from planning to execution and even analysis. Collaborating with others can not only bring new ideas to the table and accelerate the timeline of your project, but can also form vital connections and even friendships that make research even more enjoyable.

What was your most memorable experience as an undergraduate student?

I would honestly have to say that my CELL398 research course in Dr. Anastassia Voronova’s lab (current lab) has

been most memorable in my undergraduate career. I've not only been a part of influential and important research, but I have formed many connections – both professionally and personally, with my lab mates. My time at the Voronova lab has been nothing but enjoyable and welcoming, so I'll always be grateful for this opportunity.

Do you have any advice for other students getting started in research?

I know the feeling of getting to the point of emailing quite literally anyone for a research position, but I strongly urge anyone going into research to find a lab researching something they are genuinely interested in, and if it turns out that you aren't actually interested in it, change labs. While this seems intimidating, your performance in a project that interests you and that you're passionate about will be substantially better than a project you find no excitement in. The key to research is finding the research that is right for you.