

Science with Heart

JOHN PRENSNER, ORIGINALLY

from the Boston area, is starting his third year of the M.D./Ph.D. program. Since coming to Michigan, Prensner has worked in the lab of Arul Chinnaiyan (M.D./Ph.D. 1999), whose research team a few years ago discovered intriguing evidence that gene fusions are implicated in the development of prostate cancer.

INTERVIEW BY WHITLEY HILL

PHOTO BY J. ADRIAN WYLIE

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I FELT A SENSE OF WELCOME AND belonging from the very first day. Arul is all about the science, not pretense. The first time I met him his shirt had a hole in the elbow. After talking in his office, he took me into the lab and introduced me to people looking at data on a computer screen, and immediately Arul and the others included me in the conversation. At one point, somebody commented, ‘This is private data, just so you know.’ I simply nodded. There was no time lag between meeting people in the lab and becoming a part of the lab. I was assimilated, so to speak, as soon as I walked in the door.

“To be in a place where what’s going on is directly involved in the future of patient care and the advancement of science and medical knowledge is a great feeling. My interest in cancer research is — well, not secondary to, but maybe a parallel component of a desire to ease the pain of someone going through the ordeal of cancer.

“To me, all my efforts — clinical and research — are guided by a common goal: to make a difference in somebody’s life.”

—JOHN PRENSNER

