Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my colleagues Sarah Boddy, Sarah Jacob, Leila, Darrel, Christian, Milene, Nok, Nop, Wei, Christos, Lucy, Sarah Cruz and Jo for their support, cooperation and advice during my PhD. They have been very supportive and have shown a lot of team work making the life in the lab easier. It has been a big pleasure for me to work with them and I have learnt a lot from each one of them. The postdocs have always brought a lot of good ideas for the project, and I really appreciate that. I have been very pleased for doing research with the Professor Marcelo Rivolta, he made my PhD a great learning experience. His guidance, comprehension, tenacity and vast knowledge are admirable. I am convinced that Marcelo will harvest a lot more success in his career.

I would also like to thank to my advisors Professor Peter W. Andrews and Professor Mikko Juusola, the meetings were always a stressful moment for me but very valuable after all. Their advice was always concise, useful and wise. I also want to thank all the colleagues in the Centre for Stem Cell Biology, their experience and advice has always been very helpful for me, enriching my studies.

My closest friends have been an important part of my life during all these years in Sheffield. They have made everything more enjoyable for me. I will always have an enormous respect and appreciation for my friend Nicolas and I feel very lucky for meeting him. I also thank my friend Daniel who is not only an exceptional scientist but also an excellent person, full of strength and certainly admired by anyone who really knows him. I have learned a lot from our scientific discussions, and his moral support and technical advice will always be appreciated.

I am also very grateful to a very special person, Christina. Her kindness, wisdom and love were always there for me. She has motivated me and make me see things from a different perspective, I feel very fortunate for having her.

Finally I want to thank my very large family, in particular my brothers and my parents for the education that they gave me, and because this thesis is also a product of their love and dedication to me. I want to express my gratefulness to my brother Ernesto who has always sincerely believed in me.