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Dear Dr. Knowitall
Postdoc Association Committees

VISIT US AT: http://www.med.emory.edu/postdoc/PostdocComm
February

18/Monday
Ethics Course I (Pre-registration required)
Time: 3-5:30pm
Room: SOM 178P

20/Wednesday
Green Card Workshop
Time: 2-3:30pm
Room: James B. Williams Medical Education Building, Rm 120

21/Thursday
Lab Management in Academia I (Pre-registration required)
Time: 3-5:30pm
Room: SOM 153A

26/Tuesday
Ethics Course II (Pre-registration required)
Time: 3-5:30pm
Room: SOM 190P

28/Thursday
Finding Grant Funding for International Postdocs
Time: 3-5pm
Room: SOM 110

March

4/Monday
Lab Management in Academia II (Pre-registration required)
Time: 3-5:30pm
Room: SOM 153A

7/Thursday
Ethics Course III (Pre-registration required)
Time: 3-5:30pm
Room: SOM 153A

11/Monday
Lab Management in Academia III (Pre-registration required)
Time: 3-5:30pm
Room: SOM 190P

21/Thursday
Lab Management in Academia IV (Pre-registration required)
Time: 3-5:30pm
Room: SOM 178P

18/Monday
Ethics Course IV (Pre-registration required)
Time: 3-5:30pm
Room: SOM 178P

May

16/Thursday
Postdoctoral Research Symposium
Time: 8am-5pm
Room: SOM 120/Lobby

30/Thursday
New Postdoctoral Fellows Orientation
Time: 11am-2pm
Room: SOM 153A

Grant Writing Workshops:

| Class type | Class schedule | Time | NIH deadline | Room |
|------------|----------------(713,795),(996,810) | | | |
| Preparing for the NIH NRSA F32 Individual fellowship grant proposal (3-class series) | Fridays: February 2013 2/1, 2/8 and 2/15 | 9-11 am | 4/8/2013 | 455 |
| K Award: Preparing a Resubmission | Monday, March 25, 2013 | 11:15-12:00 pm | 7/12/2013 | 153A |
| Preparing for the NIH NRSA F32 Individual fellowship grant proposal (3-class series) | Fridays: June 2013 6/7, 6/14 and 6/21 | 9-11 am | 8/8/2013 | TBD |
Advisor Perspectives: "What is a Postdoc?"

Interview by Monika Anand, Ph.D.

Professor: Dr. Lawrence H. Boise, Ph.D., Department of Hematology and Medical Oncology

Q1. From a postdoc advisor's point of view, what is considered to be a good postdoctoral experience?

While there are many aspects to a good postdoctoral experience, the most important are research productivity and publications. Productivity will benefit the postdoc as it will create more opportunities for future grant applications and positions in academia or elsewhere.

Q2. What do you look for in a strong postdoc candidate? What advice can you give to graduate students who are looking for a postdoc lab, especially those who are not able to publish part of their work due to funding issues?

I look for several things when considering a new graduate for a postdoctoral position:

First, I am interested in the lab they came from. If I know the mentor or the mentor’s work then it is easier for me to determine if the student was trained well in graduate school. If I am not familiar with the mentor or their work, I will look at where they trained. This should not be an issue for Emory students!

Second, I am interested in the student’s publication record. Have they published their work and if so [is it] in a quality journal? If not, is there a reason? For students who have not been able to publish due to funding issues - I can still look for the lab/program they trained in. However, I have only run across this once, where a student could not publish because of issues with a mentor. In this case the letters of reference from committee members were crucial for me to make a decision about whether I should consider the individual for an interview.

Finally, I look carefully at the cover letter or email requesting a postdoctoral position. I check the letter to see if it is formatted generically for a mass emailing or if the letter is specifically for my research and lab showing a genuine interest in our lab’s research work.

If the application passes this initial test, I will contact the student and ask for letters. So students who send out requests for positions should have people lined up to write letters. I do put more weight into letters from people I know. So, you may want to discuss your postdoc wish list with your mentor or committee as you never know, you might have a contact that can help. That is how I got my postdoc. It wasn’t my mentor, but two other faculty members who knew the person I wanted to work with and they were the ones who got my application noticed.

Q3. What has been the biggest challenge for you as a PI in training/mentoring postdocs?

Productivity during the postdoc is going to have the greatest influence on an individual’s job opportunities, therefore assuring that postdocs have projects that will allow them to be productive so they can write fellowship grants and papers are the greatest challenge. The job market for quality academic positions is highly competitive and if a postdoc is interested in pursuing that, then I have to do my best to put them in a position to do so.

Q4. What suggestion can you give to help early postdocs succeed in their academic career?

Work hard and become the expert in your field! You should strive to be the one teaching your mentor what the direction of the project is. I sound like a broken record but getting grants and quality papers is a necessity. I have sat on a few faculty search committees for positions here at Emory in the last few years and the competition was fierce. That competition is almost completely based on publication record and funding record. Those were for tenure-track positions. There are more, early faculty positions available (e.g. Instructor) and these are less competitive but are also not as secure. However, moving from one of these types of positions to the tenure-track is becoming more common these days.

It is never too early to start networking. I started talking to faculty and taking the lead on collaborations between the lab I was in and other labs very early in my postdoc. This helped me make contacts that I still use to this day. I’m not sure how things like LinkedIn work for this. I did most of my networking at scientific meetings or following up on emails/phone calls with collaborators. I was also fortunate in that my postdoc advisor let me give talks for him at meetings when he could not make it. It was a little intimidating at first, but really paid off in the end because people started to identify my work with me as much as my mentor. A former student of mine landed a top postdoc position by doing the same. Definitely take advantage of any opportunity where you can present your work.

Q5. Do you think the postdoc experience is necessary for individuals who are looking to transition into industry or government sector, rather than academia?

My impression would be yes, as many of my friends and colleagues who are in industry or government did academic postdocs, however I don’t have personal experience with this. I think the Postdoc Office here at Emory would be an excellent place to find out more about the role of the academic postdoc leading to careers in industry or government.

Q6. How open are you to postdocs who are seeking "non-traditional" careers outside of the academia? Do you think the academic field is primed for these types of postdocs?

Everyone has to take their own path and for many that includes “non-traditional” careers. I have friends from when I was a postdoc who went on to law school and work as patent attorneys with an emphasis on biotech. One of my former postdocs went on to become a very successful research admin-
Advisor Perspectives: "What is a Postdoc?" (continued)

Administrator and is now in the upper echelon of management in a medical school at a large university. However, in all of these cases, while the person was working in the lab, they worked really hard and were productive. They understood that productivity in the lab would also give them options as they went to law school or into administration. The postdoc who is now an administrator also was interested in teaching and for 3 years ran an undergraduate class. She did this on her own time and did not sacrifice her lab time. She moved the class to 8 AM so that it would not disrupt her day. So you can take a non-traditional path from traditional postdoc training. I do think it would be nice if we could somehow provide a little more insight into these career paths for grad students and postdocs.

Q7. Why do you think the "postdoc" position exists and do you think that given the current state of government funding that 10-15 years from now, the postdoc position will look the same as it does today? Why or why not?

The postdoc position exists because students coming out of grad school are not quite ready to be independent. They need more experience and time to just do research. Most grad students are still taking classes, teaching, etc., through their first 3 years so they are only fulltime researchers for about half (or less!) of their graduate career. The postdoc is probably the only time that a person can commit 100% of their time to research and that is what is needed to become a truly independent researcher.

As for the future of the postdoc, I have no reason to believe that the position itself will change much moving forward. I do worry that if the current funding situation is sustained or gets worse, there will be less postdoc positions available to students. This will make it even more important to be a productive grad student.

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Postdoctoral Research Symposium

By Nnenna A. Finn, Ph.D.

The 6th Annual Postdoctoral Research Symposium is set to take place on Thursday, May 16th, 2013. This event is being coordinated by The Office of Postdoctoral Education (OPE) and the Postdoctoral Research Symposium Committee. The Research Symposium serves as a forum for all Postdoctoral Fellows in the Biomedical Sciences at Emory University to share their work with other Postdoctoral Fellows and the greater Emory community. Events will include a keynote address, Outstanding Mentor Awards and Honor Awards for Postdoctoral Fellows. The scientific portion of the event will include four sessions of 10-minute presentations and two poster sessions during the day. This will be followed by a reception/social.

Emory Postdoctoral Fellows are highly encouraged to submit abstracts which have been presented at scientific meetings within the last year or which are being prepared for future meetings. The Postdoctoral Association Committee will be responsible for choosing oral and poster presentations based on the abstracts submitted. Specific details regarding the abstract submission process will be sent out in the coming weeks!

We look forward to your abstract submission.

Visit the OPE website!

The place to find out about all the events and news relevant to postdocs, and to learn about the Postdoctoral Association Committees. Come join us!

http://www.med.emory.edu/postdoc/

http://www.med.emory.edu/postdoc/
Cell Biology


Article Summary by: Nnenna A. Finn, Ph.D.

A new form of intercellular communication

In multicellular organisms, intercellular communication allows for the coordination of a diverse array of critical cellular processes, from growth and proliferation to apoptosis and senescence. Common forms of intercellular communication include the paracrine like transfer of soluble factors, such as cytokines and growth factors, from one cell to the next and the transfer of soluble factors via cellular openings called gap junctions. In recent years, however, a new form of intercellular communication has come to light. The discovery of secreted microRNAs in circulating biological fluid such as serum and plasma has sparked new hypotheses of their involvement in complex intercellular signaling events. Evidence in the literature supports the role of circulating microRNAs as potential mediators of intercellular signaling not only in physiological settings but also in a variety of pathological conditions. Moreover, the discovery that various pathologies alter the abundance and location of circulating microRNAs, suggests that these molecules could be used as potential biomarkers of disease. The highlighted paper provides an excellent summary of recent literature in the area of circulating microRNAs and their potential for improving upon current methods for the diagnosis and treatment of human disease.

Immunology

http://www.jimmunol.org/content/189/12/5503.short?related-urls=yes&legid=jimmunol;189/12/5503

Article Summary by: Amelia Hofstetter, Ph.D.

When B cells protect without antibodies

Typhoid fever and non-typhoidal salmonellosis are critical threats to human health. However, the correlates of immunity against salmonellosis remain poorly defined. Using three transgenic mouse strains, Nanton et al. determined that the contribution of B cells to immunity against Salmonella is largely antibody (immunoglobulin, Ig) independent. Interferon gamma (IFN-γ) provided by Salmonella-specific CD4+ Th1 cells is critical for bacterial clearance. CD4 T cells are also required for the development of a protective memory response to Salmonella. Curiously, B cells are also required for protective memory, although the bacteria are sequestered inside macrophages. However, the role of antibodies in this immune response remains controversial.

After immunization with attenuated Salmonella, mice lacking B cells entirely (JhD mice) succumbed to Salmonella infection. In contrast, wild-type mice and mice which can only generate one type of Ig (m+s IgM mice) survived challenge with Salmonella and 75% of mice incapable of secreting antibody (mlgM mice) survived Salmonella challenge. Bacterial clearance in m+s IgM and mlgM mice was identical to wild-type mice, but decreased in JhD mice. It is known that B cells contribute to CD4 T cell responses through both antigen-presentation and cytokine production. The number of CD4 T cells producing IFN-γ in response to Salmonella was decreased in JhD mice compared to wild-type mice. However, m+s IgM mice had the same number of IFN-γ+ CD4 T cells specific for Salmonella as wild-type mice. Interestingly, mlgM mice had higher numbers of Salmonella-specific IFN-γ+ CD4 and CD8 T cells than controls. Together these data demonstrate that the contribution of B cells to the Salmonella-specific immune response is largely antibody independent.

These results caution against use of circulating IgG as a measurement of vaccine efficacy. This study also underlines the importance of targeting B cells during development of an improved Salmonella vaccine.
The Kola Nut and Igbo Culture (Nigeria, Africa)

By Nnenna A. Finn, Ph.D.

The kola nut is the fruit of the kola tree which is native to the tropical rainforests of Africa. Aside from its uses in western culture to flavor soft-drinks and to diminish hunger pangs, the kola nut also has religious and tribal significance to the Igbo tribe of Nigeria, a well-known country on the coast of western Africa. Nigeria is a land that is populated by a variety of tribal cultures and peoples living in close proximity. As a result, there are many opportunities for peoples of different backgrounds, beliefs, and cultures to be exposed to one another. The Igbo people, being a very welcoming people, have developed a traditional welcoming ceremony involving the kola nut. This welcoming ceremony is performed in a variety of different celebrations at which non-Igbo people are likely to be in attendance, e.g. weddings, anniversaries, baptisms, etc. The kola nut ceremony is regarded as an official way of welcoming peoples of all backgrounds to join in the celebration at hand and, at least for the duration of the event, consider themselves to be a part of the Igbo culture. The ceremony involves the incantation of welcoming words said in the native Igbo tongue. In addition, the ceremonial leader, usually an Igbo Chief or the eldest Igbo member in attendance, speaks words of blessing asking all the elders and ancestors that have long passed to officially bless the event and all in attendance. This blessing rite involves a series of calls and responses wherein the leader makes the primary call and the crowd responds appropriately. The calls and responses utilized in this portion of the ceremony can be thought of as a sort of script – all vocalizations are done in the traditional Igbo language and do not change from one event to the next. Following this portion of the welcoming ceremony, the kola nut is introduced and broken in a ceremonial fashion and then shared with all in attendance. By eating the kola nut, members of the event are symbolically accepting the welcome invitation and blessing that has been bestowed. After the breaking and sharing of the kola nut, the party can officially begin!

Kansas City, Missouri

By Jacqueline Fairley, Ph.D.

Kansas City is located in the northwest region of The Show Me State, Missouri, and is often affectionately referred to by its residents as K.C. Home to more than two million people and spanning state borders of both Missouri and Kansas, it is the largest city in the state of Missouri. K.C. has gained notoriety for its contributions to the musical styles of jazz and blues, Kansas City-style barbecue, and architecture. So, if you find yourself in this part of the heartland take a stroll down to the historic 18th & Vine district and visit the location where the famous jazz saxophonist Charlie “Bird” Parker played. When you get hungry stop by 12th and Brooklyn for some of Kansas City’s Own Gates Bar-B-Q where you will be greeted with a friendly, “Hi, May I Help You?”. However, before you leave be sure to visit the Country Club Plaza Shopping District which contains many of the 200 French inspired working fountains that have given the city its second nickname of ‘The City of Fountains’.

So, take in some good music, food, and scenery as you get to know my hometown and don’t forget to take a souvenir when you leave!
Dear Prof. To Be,

Regarding your future concerns, you are definitely on the right track by thinking ahead. You mentioned that your major concern is if you are ready to transition into a research tenure track faculty position. Well, while Dr. Knowitall can give you some questions to consider, only you can truly determine if you are ready to take on such a position. But before you make that decision you might want to consider the following:

*Are your current accomplishments comparable to that of incoming junior faculty at your target schools? If you do not know this information it shouldn’t be too hard to find out by doing a basic web search for institutions of your interest and reviewing some of the Curricula Vitae (CVs) of recent faculty hires. You’re looking to see if your publication and grant procurement record are similar to that of these faculty members? If not, consider finding ways to submit some manuscripts to these journals and expect to submit some proposals in order to boost up your grant funding efforts.

*Do you have a solid research plan that you could successfully implement during the tenure-track process such that you would be known as an expert in your field? If not, Dr. Knowitall asks empathically “What are you waiting for?”. Take time to connect with these individuals so that you can not only find out information on how to best navigate the tenure track process but also how best to navigate the application process for that particular institution. In the process you might also get some unexpected mentoring - now wouldn’t that be great!

When you can confidently answer “Yes” to all three of those questions then Dr. Knowitall is happy to say ‘have fun job hunting’! However if you answered “No” or “Maybe” to any or all of the above questions, Dr. Knowitall suggests that you proceed with caution and take time to change those answers into a confident “Yes”.

As always, Happy Researching!

Dr. Knowitall

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As always, Happy Researching!

Dr. Knowitall
We would like to thank all our Postdocs for their contribution to the newsletter. We encourage Postdocs to come forward and send in their articles, views, opinions, research work, jokes, and light-hearted entertainment for the coming issues of the newsletter. We also welcome the new Postdocs who have joined Emory University this semester.

Cheers!
Science Writers Committee