



NIH VFC Newsletter

2015 Fall Edition

Contributing to global science development by building careers

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VFC Brown Bag Seminar Series

NIH Library Resources and Services for NIH Fellows

By Randi Parks, PhD

The NIH Visiting Fellows Committee (VFC) had the pleasure of hosting a seminar on the topic “NIH Library Resources and Services for NIH Fellows” on October 26th, 2015. This helpful and instructive seminar was given by Diane Cooper, a Clinical Informationist at the NIH Library in Building 10. This session covered a plethora of useful resources that are offered by the NIH Library. Attendees gained many tips on resources that can help to improve their research, including reference programs, data visualization and analysis, editing services, and specialized training opportunities.

The NIH Library has an immense amount of **training** available to help handle varying types of data. Importantly, almost all of this training is offered to NIH fellows for free! The website (<http://nihlibrary.nih.gov/Pages/default.aspx>) has a calendar of upcoming training courses under the Training tab, and one-on-one training can also be requested. Topics for training courses include bioinformatics, technology, bibliometric analysis (article or individual impact), and writing and editing. Many **data services** courses are also offered, which teach fellows how to effectively organize, visualize and share their data. There is a research data informationist on staff who offers training and consultation. There are also **bioinformatics** experts on hand for personal training, as well as computers with all of the necessary analysis programs. The NIH Library is also very open to new training

opportunities – if you have an idea or need for specific training, reach out and ask!

Postdoctoral fellows are all too familiar with literature searching and compiling databases of relevant manuscripts. This seminar highlighted several exciting programs and databases that can improve literature searching and archiving. Of course the most commonly used in scientific research is **PubMed**, for which the NIH Library offers a class to teach advanced searching. Importantly, NIH Fellows are able to gain access to all of the articles available to NIH by following the “PubMed @ NIH” Quick Link on the Library homepage. If an article is unavailable, then a form can be filled out to request a scanned copy of the article, which will be obtained within 24 hours.

An interesting new program that the NIH has recently obtained is called **BrowZine**, and acts as a bookshelf for journals of interest. BrowZine is a web or mobile app that can be used to browse and read any journal available through the NIH Library. Articles can be placed aside for offline reading, which will be very useful during travel. BrowZine can be accessed via the following link: <http://nihlibrary.nih.gov/AboutUs/Announcements/Pages/browzine.aspx>. Articles obtained in BrowZine can be exported to an Endnote library. The NIH Library also offers training and support on the use of **Endnote** as a bibliographic database.

In addition to PubMed, there are many other searching databases available. **Embase** is similar to PubMed, but also includes indexed European citations that are not necessarily included in the American database. **Scopus** is a useful database when searching for conference proceedings that are not published in journals. **Google Scholar** can also be useful when searching for articles, books or

meeting abstracts, and advanced searching can help to narrow down results. For example, the addition of '.gov' or '.edu' will give only credible peer reviewed sources. Google Scholar is also useful to examine metrics of your publications, or of a specific article. A program that is very helpful in evaluating publication metrics is **Bibliomaniac**, which can be used to numerically or visually display the impact of your work when applying for positions in the future.

The NIH Library has even more services that you may not know about. They offer both oral and written translation services, notary public services, and editing services for anything from a book chapter to PowerPoint slides. The NIH Library also has three **3D printers!** These are free to use for NIH staff, and an online repository entitled '3D at NIH' shows what others are doing.

This seminar was an installment of the VFC Brown Bag seminar series. Contact organizing member Randi Parks at randi.parks@nih.gov with any questions or requests for future sessions. Look for more helpful and instructive seminars in the future!

VFC Country Support Groups at the NIH

Come be a part of us!

By Divya Gangaramani, Ph.D.

The NIH has about 4000 post doctoral fellows, almost 2000 of them coming from different corners of the world, making it a truly global campus! The first couple of months in a new country presents its own challenges: from deciding which neighborhoods to live in or finding out the

store that sells the spices you crave for, to overcoming real cultural barriers with your colleagues at work. Often times, new arrivals seek the support of other visiting fellows from their own country. To make this process easier, the Visiting Fellows Committee (VFC) has a subset of members who establish a *Country Support Group*.

The country support group forms when a VFC member volunteers to become a country representative. Check list.nih.gov to look for the country you are interested in. Some of the most active groups are France, India, Germany, China, Japan and Korea. These groups organize and promote various events either on or off of the NIH campus. They use their listserv to coordinate meet ups for socializing, weekly lunch discussions, VISA or travel related questions, tax inquiries, and more.

If you would like to start a group, you can become a representative and create a listserv and invite members to join. The country representatives serve as a point of contact between the different country support groups and the VFC, creating a strong network ensuring there is active communication and resources out there for everyone to share.

Find out if your country has an active group. Click [here](#) and get in touch with your country representative right away. If you don't find one, you can start one!

In addition, sign up for VFC-L (<https://list.nih.gov/cgi-bin/wa.exe?A0=vfc-l>) to receive information about news and upcoming events relevant to the visiting fellows community!

FelCom event

Alumni Career Paths

By Lauren Lepone, PhD

On September 15, 2015, the Fellows Committee (FelCom) held a career exploration seminar titled “NIH Alumni-Where Are They Now”. Previous postdoctoral fellows who were FelCom members during their time at the NIH returned to campus to provide an overview of their current positions. The panel included an associate professor, industry scientist, health science policy analyst, and a health scientist administrator.

The associate professor had been a postdoctoral fellow at the NIH for five years. When asked about his current daily schedule, he explained that he does not do much bench work anymore and instead has a lot of administrative duties. He has many meetings and conference calls with members of his own group as well as worldwide collaborators, and he spends a large amount of time writing grants and manuscripts. He recommended that if current fellows want to pursue a career as a professor, they should apply for grants such as a K99 during their postdoctoral training to make them more attractive candidates. He highlighted the need to be productive during the postdoctoral training leading to first author publications in high ranking journals. He also stressed the importance of soft skills such as effective communication and the ability to collaborate with others. To prepare for the job search, he recommended getting involved with FelCom, meeting with the Office of Intramural Training and Education (OITE), and starting the job search early.

The industry research scientist also had been a postdoctoral fellow at the NIH for five years. When asked about her current daily schedule,

she explained that she spends her time at the bench generating data, analyzing data, managing the other scientists on her team, and reporting the data to her team and the upper management, which requires a lot of meetings. The qualities that helped her obtain her current position are the ability to work on a team and manage reports, curiosity beyond the bench, effective communication skills, and understanding big data. Advice for current fellows wanting to pursue an industry scientist career included finding mentors in industry, networking, having a good LinkedIn page, building a project you can lead, keeping up with industry news, becoming involved in non-bench activities such as FelCom, and meeting with OITE to help format an industry-specific resume. During the job search, she also recommended to look at the job requirements rather than just the job title because different companies use different titles for the same position.

Another career path of a former FelCom member was a health science policy analyst. Policy careers can be found at the NIH or other government agencies, advocacy organizations, and Think Tanks. Her daily schedule in her current position includes a variety of different tasks such as committee meetings, planning for scientific initiatives, evaluating coding systems, supervising and mentoring policy fellows, and teaching lectures on policy. Some of the key skills necessary for this type of position include writing, analysis, knowledge of science, relationship building, balancing details with the big picture vision, and project management. She highlighted the importance of starting the job search early, using OITE to help with resumes that are tailored specifically to each job position, and exploring opportunities away from the bench to strengthen soft skills, such as through

volunteering and FelCom committees. During her time as a postdoctoral fellow, she also did a detail (<http://irp.nih.gov/catalyst/v21i2/details-details-details>), which allows fellows to explore non-bench careers.

The final career path highlighted was that of a health scientist administrator. Her current daily schedule includes developing funding and initiatives to address research gaps, organizing, attending, and presenting at scientific meetings and symposiums, drafting proposals for financial management planning, writing reviews and opinion papers, and advising grantees and monitoring their progress. Some of the skills she highlighted that are needed in her current position are scientific expertise, organizational and management skills, teamwork, communication, and leadership. She recommended that current fellows who are interested in this career path should conduct informational interviews, network, find a mentor in the field, and develop skills away from the bench such as through FelCom.

Specific for visiting fellows, the speakers explained that in their experience, a company or institution will sponsor a VISA. Non-United States citizens can find government positions as contractors. Although these alumni pursued different career paths following their postdoctoral training at the NIH, they all highlighted the importance of using the resources offered by OITE (<https://www.training.nih.gov/>), networking, and building soft skills through non-bench activities like FelCom.

NIH-SACNAS Event

Essential Tools for Becoming A Leader

By Ashley Parker, Ph.D.

The National Institutes of Health, Society for the Advancement of Chicanos, Hispanics, and Native Americans (NIH_SACNAS) hosted a seminar on “Becoming A Leader.” Dr. Sharon Milgram, director of the Office of Intramural Training and Education (OITE), was the speaker for the leadership seminar.

The workshop began with interactive exercises engaging positive thinking. During one of the icebreaker exercises fellows were encouraged to meet other participants and share (1) something you were grateful for; (2) specific events you were looking forward to; (3) and something you were proud of. These were just a few examples of how fellows were encouraged to actively train themselves to focus on thinking positive. Shortly after the exercise, Dr. Milgram discussed the meaning of leadership and addressed the question “what does it take to be a leader?” The workshop provided information about the importance of understanding our personality traits such as being assertive or reflective, our ability to deal with conflict, and knowing our triggers and hot buttons. All of these examples belong to the self-awareness element of what is known as “emotional intelligence.” In addition, self-awareness involves understanding our communication skills and properly evaluating our strengths and weaknesses to further revisit the areas that need to be developed. Dr. Milgram also discussed that in leadership positions it is important to understand colleagues, co-workers, employees, students, bosses, and the environment at work. This allows leaders to

enhance their communication skills and develop ways to interact with various individuals and the organizational systems that we are in contact with.

One of the most important components to being a leader is the ability to make wise choices and decisions. Dr. Milgram quoted, “leadership is not making a decision too fast, but making a decision fast enough.” In making the best decisions, leaders must practice using rational thinking, which involves pausing and reflecting before reacting. This is the complete opposite of the fight or flight emotional response used by most individuals when faced with challenging situations.

Controlling negative emotions can be challenging at times, however this is part of the second element known as “self-management.” As Dr. Milgram discussed, this is a direct reflection of knowing yourself, in an effort to properly deal with controlling edges in your communication as it relates to your personality and conflict style. One may ask, how do I control the edges in my communication or what does this mean? For example, if you are usually an introvert, it is important to know when to tone things up or if you’re the complete opposite, know when to tone down your personality and back off. Self-management also involves knowing how to deal with setbacks and being appropriately driven. Again this reflects back to using your self-awareness and being able to recognize your own emotions and provide yourself with the opportunity to use your strengths to move things forward. Also, Dr. Milgram stressed the importance of allowing yourself to be flexible and adjustable during the resolution process.

The third element to practicing emotional intelligence is social awareness. When faced

with a conflict or a challenging situation, accurately reading the emotions of others is critical. This may seem obvious, however these are things that require practice. In addition, the practice of leadership involves having empathy for others, particularly during combative or extraordinary circumstances. In some cases, there may be a need to involve other individuals; therefore it is imperative to understand the chain of command and the infrastructure of the organization.

The final component to practicing emotional intelligence is “relationship management.” This may be the most exciting part about learning to be a good leader. Relationship management involves inspiring individuals in your environment and encouraging them to recognize and accept your vision or that of the organization you represent. This requires you to be influential and motivate others toward reaching your goals. Most have heard the saying, “there is no I in team,” therefore leadership requires promoting teamwork and working together accomplishing the goals.

Leading a team requires mentorship and coaching of others, which requires effective communication and understanding the personality traits of others. In addition, managing relationships includes promoting inclusion of diverse individuals, which may result in knowing how to deal effectively with the unfamiliar. Therefore, managing difficult conversations is important and should be expected in leadership. This was a great opportunity during the workshop to think about a time you did something well in the emotional intelligence realm. The exercise was used to explain the context of the situation, evaluate how you felt, and describe which emotional intelligence elements were used effectively.

Dr. Sharon Milgram in the Office of Intramural Training and Education provided all of the techniques described in this article to be a good leader. I strongly encourage fellows to visit their website and seek additional opportunities to attend future events and workshops¹. If you are interested in learning more about events hosted by the NIH-SACNAS, consider joining their list-serv, LinkedIn group, or contact Natasha Lugo-Escobar².

1. <https://www.training.nih.gov/>

2. lugoescobarn@mail.nih.gov

Opportunities

Learn Writing by Editing with the Fellows Editorial Board

By Ping Chen, PhD

Communication plays a key role in scientific work. Publishing papers is one of the major ways for scientists to present their work to the scientific community and public. While obtaining good data is important, being a successful scientist also requires effective communication. Similarly, as postdoctoral fellows, scientific paper writing is an essential part to reach a fruitful training, including writing for grants. The question is how to improve writing skills. The traditional and efficient way is to learn through practice. One great place at the NIH to improve your writing skills is the Fellows Editorial Board (FEB). You can either submit your manuscripts to FEB for editing service, or be a member of FEB to help others with writing. Here, learning from editing is emphasized.

FEB is an organization led by National Cancer Institute (NCI) and consists of

postdoctoral fellows from different institutes at the NIH. The service provided by FEB is available to the entire NIH community. FEB sets meetings every week to discuss the manuscripts submitted to them by the NIH community. Three primary editors, one associate editor and one senior editor form a team for each assigned manuscript. Each manuscript will be provided two forms of reports. One is called a soft copy, which is a PDF version of the manuscript with detailed editing suggestions. The other one is called an e-Report, which summarizes the major suggestions from all the editors and is written in Word format. The scope of the manuscripts accepted by FEB is from original research papers to review paper, from scientific proposals for grant application to personal research statements for job application, from both basic and clinical research. The editors handle a variety of papers and respond to authors in a timely manner after extensive teamwork. It usually takes about one week for primary editors to finish the editing. FEB members are from different laboratories and institutes at the NIH. They exchange their ideas throughout the editing process. Two primary editors are responsible for compiling all the comments together to generate both a soft copy and an e-Report. The associate and senior editors will finally proofread and verify the accuracy before sending the reports back to the author who submitted the manuscript.

Serving as a member on the FEB is enjoyable and challenging because of the diversity of the manuscripts and research topics. Members of the FEB learn science and writing from their editing, make friendships, build their network, and share thoughts. Learning how to write and communicate effectively is important for all postdoctoral fellows no matter what type of career path will be pursued. Clearly, FEB provides a unique platform for postdoctoral

fellows to learn from editing. For those who are interested in joining FEB, follow the link for more information.

<https://ccr.cancer.gov/training/trainee-resources/editorial-board>

Where are they now? “Follow your passion”- tips for international postdocs *An interview with Dr. Kundan Sengupta*

By Anurag N. Paranjape, PhD

As a former postdoctoral and then Research Fellow at the National Cancer Institute, Dr. Kundan Sengupta is an excellent resource for learning how to transition into an independent research position. He moved to India in 2010 to start his own lab at Indian Institute of Science Education & Research, Pune and his lab currently works on investigating molecular mechanisms regulating non-random positioning of chromosomes and the relationship between spatial organization of gene loci and their functions. In this interview he talks about his experience at NIH and provides advice on various career options available for international postdocs.



Can you briefly explain your research experience during your time at NIH?

I worked as a postdoctoral fellow for 5 years in the laboratory of Dr. Thomas Ried at the

Section of Cancer Genomics, Genetics Branch, in the National Cancer Institute (NCI). I subsequently became a research fellow in the Laboratory of Pathology at NCI for a year. I simply had an excellent research experience during my stay at NIH. I worked towards understanding the factors that regulate nuclear architecture and chromosome organization in cancer cells. Research in the area of chromosome territories was relatively in its infancy during my postdoc days. I was fortunate enough to be associated with this field relatively early, which has now progressed at an unprecedented rate owing to the remarkable technological strides in cell biology, microscopy, and genomics.

What were the advantages of getting trained at NIH?

Personally, one of the most important advantages of getting trained at the NIH was to appreciate the emphasis on both fundamental and applied research and how both facets of research are seamlessly integrated. The availability of conceivably “everything” from molecules to animals under one single roof was fascinating for me as a basic researcher. Furthermore, interacting with fellow postdocs across disciplines and sharing experiences in research was illuminating. I would like to especially mention the wonderful core-facilities across NIH, numerous workshops, and meetings, which made research a fun and fulfilling experience. Another exciting part of the training at NIH was the access to special interest groups in every possible aspect of fundamental and applied life sciences. Among others, an enriching experience was to attend the weekly lectures by internationally acclaimed researchers - again all in one campus!!

Did your stay at NIH help you in networking and building collaborations?

Yes, my stay at NIH allowed me to network extensively with fellow postdocs and researchers. My postdoc advisor Dr. Thomas Ried actively encouraged me to network and build collaborations across labs at NIH that worked on fundamental aspects of cancer biology with model systems ranging from cells to mice. Networking with experts in microscopy and imaging was a true revelation, as imaging really has no limits!!

Explain briefly your current research interests.

I have continued my research in the area of nuclear architecture. The focus of my lab at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Pune is to examine the molecular mechanisms that regulate nuclear architecture and genome organization in cancer cells. My lab also addresses the role of nuclear landmarks such as the nuclear pore complex and the nucleolus in establishing the rules of chromatin organization across various cell types.

Can you give some tips to current postdocs who plan to join academia?

“Follow your passion” is a simple tip that I would suggest any postdoc intending to join academia. If a postdoc seriously considers academia – “just go after it”! Academia or industry comes with its fair share of challenges. A postdoc has to be acutely aware of his or her inclination relatively early in postdoctoral life (i.e. within the first two years) if one wants to join academia and plan way in advance. It is always useful to discuss one’s career choices with their postdoc advisor, collaborators, and mentors periodically. More importantly, make the right moves at the right time and actively

pursue every conceivable opportunity that arises. Visiting academic institutions and networking with researchers extensively about one’s research aspirations goes a long way in joining academia.

Other than academia, what are the current prospects in India for returning postdocs?

India has excellent prospects for returning postdocs, in addition to a vast array of research institutions, currently 16 Indian Institute of Technologies (IIT) have been established. My own institution, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) at Pune, focuses on basic research and teaching. There are currently 6 IISERs and each currently has 100 faculty members and 1000 undergraduate and graduate students, although they have only existed for the past 9 years. Attractive prospects for returning postdocs are the Wellcome Trust-DBT India Alliance, Ramanujan, and Ramalingaswami fellowships. An exhaustive list of opportunities in India can be found at IndiaBioscience.org.

Other than academia, what career options can you suggest to current international postdocs at NIH?

There are numerous career options for international postdocs all over the world, in addition to academia. Needless to mention, these opportunities are country and region specific and are listed below:

-Biomedical/biotech industries have excellent opportunities for returning postdocs based on a mutual compatibility between the experience and expertise of the applicant with the requirements of the concerned industry.

-Launch startup companies (private enterprise, entrepreneurship) in the biomedical and clinical-diagnostic sector.

-Science communication is a great field including science writing and science popularization.

-Grant management and grant advisors.

-Science policy and government, science management.

OITE Workshop: English Communication for Visiting Scientists

November 20th and 23rd, 2015

The OITE will be holding a two-day workshop that aims to help visiting fellows and graduate students interested in improving their English communication skills. If you are interested, register here:

https://www.training.nih.gov/events/view/2/1727/English_Communication_for_Visiting_Scientists

Upcoming Events

VFC Hockey Match Trip

November 19th, 2015

7PM

Verizon Center

601 F St NW, Washington DC

(Nearest metro station: Gallery Place/Chinatown)

Join the VFC to watch the Washington Capitals take on the Dallas Stars! There are 70 tickets available for \$39 and includes a free t-shirt. Seats are located in sections 425 and 426. If you're interested contact Ian Yeung (ian.yeung@nih.gov).

1st Annual Meeting European Scientific Diasporas in North America

November 19, 2015

8:30AM – 4PM

At Spain Arts & Culture Center – The Mansion of
the Former Ambassador of Spain
2801 16th St NW, Washington DC

VFC Monthly Lunch

November 20, 2015

12PM

2nd floor cafeteria, Building 10

Looking for an easy way to meet new people without having to veer very far from your lab? Join the VFC for its monthly lunches held at the 2nd floor cafeteria in Building 10 every 3rd Friday of each month where you can bring your lunch and chat with other fellows. Look for the Visiting Fellows sign.

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Looking for Leadership Opportunities?

Join the NIH Visiting Fellows Committee (VFC), an organization that is:

- dedicated to building community amongst the NIH's diverse fellow population;
- committed to bringing career building resources and events to the fellows of the NIH;

Become a voice regarding issues of importance to visiting fellows.

Help your career as you help your colleagues.

Contact any of the Visiting Fellows Committee officers below to find out about being a part of the VFC.

www.training.nih.gov/felcom