



NIH VFC Newsletter

2013 Fall Edition

Contributing to global science development by building careers

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Science Voices from Home Wellcome Trust / Department of Biotechnology India Alliance

By Khyati Kapoor, PhD

The Visiting Fellows Committee (VFC) “Science Voices from Home” program organizes seminars and meetings to keep the visiting fellows informed about the existing and upcoming job or funding opportunities in their home country or other countries in the world. One such event was held on May 13, 2013 and focused on funding opportunities in India which were presented by Dr. Shahid Jameel. Dr. Jameel is a senior scientist and virology group leader at the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) in India. He took over as CEO of the Wellcome Trust/ Department of Biotechnology (DBT) India Alliance in April 2013. He spoke about the various fellowships provided by India Alliance to scientists at different stages in their career. This event was co-organized by the VFC (a sub-committee of FelCom), the Fogarty International Center (FIC), the Office of Intramural Training and Education (OITE), and the Association of Indian fellows at the NIH (NIH-INDIA). About 90 fellows registered for this event.

The Wellcome Trust/DBT India Alliance is a 10-year, £160 million initiative funded equally by the Wellcome Trust, UK and the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India. It was launched in 2008 and was aimed at providing a bigger canvas to help young people and create future leaders in biomedical research. It was started to provide opportunities for bench scientists to establish and lead an independent research career in India. The vision is to establish new ways of conducting research in India by 1) encouraging students to pursue their postdoctoral training in India 2) reversing the brain drain and 3) attracting

foreign nationals. These fellowships are awarded at four key career stages and are aimed to fund the full spectrum of human and biomedical research - from fundamental molecular and cellular studies to clinical and public health research.

Dr. Jameel introduced the four different fellowship levels as Early Career, Intermediate, Senior and Margdarshi and further elaborated on the eligibility and requirements of each of these fellowships. All these fellowships are open for anyone who is already pursuing or intending to pursue an academic research career in India. Dr. Jameel discussed that the same scheme applies to applicants with public health and clinical research backgrounds for which a PhD is not mandatory but an MPH or MD degree respectively, is a must.

Fellowship	Eligibility (postdoctoral research experience in yrs)	Aim
Early career	Final year of PhD up to 4 yrs	Launch
Intermediate	4-7 yrs	Establish
Senior	7-12 yrs	Lead
Margdarshi	Leader	Excellence

Dr. Jameel also discussed at length the application and screening process for these fellowships and called them to be rigorously peer-reviewed. The applications are assessed on the basis of the research proposal, applicant’s track record, recommendation letters, infrastructure at the host institute, and collaborators. The whole application process follows six stages from the preliminary application through award of the fellowship and takes about 6-8 months. The award includes funds for personal support, research expenses or travel allowance and the amounts awarded vary depending on the fellowship level.

He stated that India Alliance also bears a responsibility to reach potential applicants who are ready to start their independent research career in India. For this purpose, India Alliance staff routinely participates in various outreach activities in India and abroad. Dr. Jameel concluded by

revealing the statistics around the number of awardees since 2009. He said that a total of 93 fellowships have been awarded to date, out of which 80 have been activated. Of these fellowships, 28 were Early Career, 47 Intermediate, 17 Senior and 1 Margadarshi. The progress of the awardees is assessed annually at the fellows' meeting. Dr. Jameel also mentioned that the number of awards can be increased but there will be no compromise on quality. He summarized that the aim of this program is to provide "something for everyone". This event was followed by a traditional Indian lunch buffet sponsored by the Indo-US Science and Technology Forum (IUSSTF). For more details please visit www.wellcomedbt.org or contact info@wellcomedbt.org.

NIH-India Seminar Series

An Interview with Dr. Shruti Sharma

By Amie D. Moody, PhD

In May, I attended a seminar by Dr. Shruti Sharma, a guest speaker in the NIH-INDIA seminar series. She is a post-doctoral fellow at the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), Switzerland and recently earned her PhD. Before her presentation, I sat with her for a brief interview about her career and her time in Switzerland.

Would you describe why you chose to pursue a research career in Switzerland?

I am originally from New Delhi, India. I earned my bachelors of pharmacy from Delhi University, and then a master's (MS) in pharmaceutical biotechnology from the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research in Mohali, Punjab. During my master's program, I read an interesting paper from Dr. Andreas Mayer's group at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. After completing my MS, I applied to the

Biochemistry/Cell Biology program where Dr. Mayer researches. I was invited to be one of eight applicants interviewed, and was selected to join Dr. Mayer's laboratory. I transitioned to EPFL upon completion of my PhD in September 2012. My transition from graduate student to post-doctoral fellow was easy as I only moved to a different institution in the same city.

What was the biggest challenge in your transition from India to Switzerland?

The language barrier! Switzerland has four official languages; none of them are English. Furthermore, the predominant language is regional. For example, Lausanne is close to the French border, therefore the language utilized in public is French (menus at restaurants, cab drivers, etc.). In my first year in Lausanne, I took French classes so that I could independently navigate around the city. Fortunately, English, although basic, is the main spoken language in research institutions, and the group leaders are fluent in English.

Secondly, the culture is very different from home in India. It is difficult to find vegetarian options when you go out to eat. Also, the cost of living is high. Although the Swiss franc is comparable to the US dollar, it can easily cost a person \$25 for an average night out.

What have been some of your positive experiences?

The first thing is that Lausanne is a beautiful and safe place to live. Once I learned basic French, I loved living in the city. Concerning research, Switzerland is a wealthy country and science is well funded.

Can you expand a little more on the education and research environment in Switzerland?

Across Switzerland, there are 10 state universities and two federal institutes: EPFL in Lausanne and Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) in Zurich. A bachelor's degree takes three years, and is taught in the regional language. Master's programs are taught in English and are completed in three or four semesters. PhD students are not

expected to write grants, and are fully funded by their PIs. There are no limits to how many conferences a graduate student may attend. Research groups are kept small, usually only four to six people, and collaborations between groups are not uncommon. Once you move onto your post-doctoral research, you must go to a different institution and may only spend four years with a single advisor. There, you are expected to write your own grants, which are easily funded.

For foreign students or post-doctoral researchers, it is easy to work in the country because employers are willing to sponsor visas. However, in order to settle permanently you must become fluent in two of the official languages and proficient in Swiss culture.

On a final note, have you given any thought to what the next step in your career is?

I do not have a specific plan. However, I know that I do not want to have my own laboratory at a major research institution. I like the idea of teaching undergraduate students. I would still be close to current science topics, and could run small research efforts. Yet, the main focus would be teaching. Finally, although I am not opposed to going somewhere else first, I would like to return home to India as the final destination of my career.

At the end of the interview, Dr. Sharma strongly recommended that researchers consider spending some time in Switzerland during their career. I thanked her for her time and wished her success with her future endeavors.

Career Tools

OITE Management Bootcamp

Getting Introduced to Management Basics

By Khyati Kapoor, PhD

Lately, many sources recognize that scientists in research learn and develop skills to improve their scientific knowledge and aptitude, but are not similarly trained for management of a team. These skills are necessary as a trainee advances to senior positions. The research group, like any non-science career team, works towards achieving a common goal, and thus faces similar challenges. The Office of Intramural Training and Education (OITE) at the NIH develops workshops and resources to improve the leadership and management skills of researchers. These workshops introduce key managerial concepts, thus helping trainees emerge better prepared to manage and lead in a team environment.

The Workplace Dynamics series consists of five leadership sessions, followed by a Management Bootcamp. It is open to all intramural trainees. The five sessions promote understanding of the various personalities in a population, which is the first-step towards becoming a successful manager. Additionally, these sessions aim to instill in trainees the qualities required for efficient leadership. A trainee is eligible for the second portion of the series, the Management Bootcamp, only upon completion of the entire leadership series. A certificate is awarded at the completion of each of these portions. The OITE suggests taking the Bootcamp approximately six months prior to leaving the NIH.

I attended all five leadership sessions in 2012. I then participated in the Management Bootcamp, held during the last week of June 2013, with about 40 other trainees. It was an intense two-day workshop introducing management and mentoring skills useful for “managing down” a team. There

were various sessions, each focusing on a specific duty that one has to perform as a manager in both bench and non-bench careers. Each of these topics was discussed by a subject-matter expert.

The first day started with a welcome to all participants by Dr. Sharon Milgram, director, OITE, who introduced the concept of transitioning to manager and listed the skills to be inculcated when taking up the responsibility of a manager. She also discussed in detail the concept of “emotional intelligence.” This pertains to controlling moods and stress while managing one’s triggers and “hot buttons” when handling difficult situations at the workplace. This requires self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social awareness, and social skills.

Dr. Lori Conlan, director, Office of Postdoctoral Services, lucidly and creatively highlighted the best practices of promoting teamwork, which included topics like motivation, setting goals, and expectations. Small groups worked through hypothetical situations that allowed trainees to practice these soft skills as a team. Julie Gold, MSW, leadership and professional development coach, emphasized that we are working in a culturally diverse environment and this heavily influences personnel behavior. So, to be a successful manager one has to embrace diversity and find ways to effectively manage a team. Brad Fackler, industry career advisor, discussed the fundamentals of the hiring and recruitment process. This included interviewing, decision-making during hiring, and the cost involved in hiring and recruiting. All of these processes are crucial parts of a manager’s role.

The Bootcamp also left a tremendous scope for introspection. It is important to be aware of one’s own strengths and weaknesses as a manager, and to improve areas of weakness so that one may become a successful manager. Apart from introducing management concepts and skills, the Bootcamp provides many opportunities for both interacting within a group and networking. A certificate of completion is awarded at the end of the Management Bootcamp. The Workplace Dynamics Series and the Management Bootcamp

are offered twice a year. Dates for the next series are available under the "Upcoming Events" section of the OITE website, <https://www.training.nih.gov/events/upcoming>.

Where are they now? From MD (Mouse Doctor) to MD (Medical Doctor) *Dr. Lai Wei’s Academic Career Path*

By Ping Chen, MD-PhD

Dr. Lai Wei, a staff scientist at the National Eye of Institute (NEI) and lead investigator at the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), has been awarded the “1000 Young Talents Plan” in China with a multi-million US dollar startup package. He will be a professor of ophthalmology in Zhongshan Ophthalmic Center, Sun Yat-Sen University, which is located in southern China close to Hong Kong. After obtaining his PhD in bioinformatics and pathology from the University of Tennessee in Memphis in 2006, Dr. Wei was trained as a National Research Council postdoctoral research associate in the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS) before he became a staff scientist and lead investigator at NEI and NCCAM. He published approximately 50 peer-reviewed articles in journals such as *Nature*, *Nature Immunology*, *Immunity*, and *Cell Reports*. We are interested in his academic training so we interviewed him.

Q: Dr. Wei, could you please briefly describe your research training?

A: I trained as an orthopedic surgeon in medical school in China. Being a doctor taking care of patients really seemed a wonderful career for me at the beginning. However, I started to do some simple research when I entered the third year of

medical school. I studied the in vivo effects of Chinese medicine using a mouse model of type II collagen-induced arthritis. I continued my research until my departure for the United States where I started the graduate research training as a scientist and later on as a physician scientist.

I am computer savvy and was immediately attracted by a new field - bioinformatics. Like a lot of young students starting graduate school, I was obsessed with new tools and technical details to which I had never been exposed. However, my two great PhD mentors tried really hard to emphasize that I, as a scientist, should become a scholar in a specific field. I should not only know the technical details of each experiment or the algorithms of every program used, but also understand the biology so that I can ask the correct questions and answer them with the correct tool sets. After going through the entire wet and dry lab training and receiving my PhD, I wanted to call myself a systems biologist who knows quite a bit about cytokine signaling pathways, instead of a bioinformatician.

With training in both computational and experimental biology, as well as clinical patient care, I started my postdoc training at the NIH looking for a unique and maybe cutting edge research topic that would best use my skill set and possibly be the foundation for my career. Two months after I started at the NIAMS, I heard a great lecture given by Dr. Keji Zhao about his new toy - a second-generation high-throughput sequencing machine, the Solexa Sequencer. Dr. Zhao also spoke about his exciting new research on the epigenetic features of human CD4⁺ T cells. My postdoc mentor was studying the molecular mechanisms controlling helper T cell differentiation. We were lucky enough to collaborate with Dr. Zhao and became one of the first groups studying the epigenetic regulation of CD4⁺ T cell differentiation using high-throughput sequencing technology.

After the best postdoctoral training I could possibly have hoped for at the NIAMS, I was lucky enough to move to a lab conducting clinical research as a staff scientist. I have to admit, after

leaving medical school, I had been a mouse doctor for too long so I missed clinical work. More importantly, I believe that science is the way to advance clinical patient care. Therefore, translational research must be the way to go. As a continuation of my previous research, my lab studies the epigenetic regulation in ocular inflammatory diseases, starting from patients and then going back to animal models for in vivo and mechanistic studies. In addition, as a lead investigator at the NCCAM with my own clinical protocol and translational study, I have been investigating how alternative medicine changes the immune system. Finally, I am a medical doctor again doing translational studies and clinical work.

When I started to explore other places for advancing my career, China became a natural choice for me. China's clinical resources are most attractive to me because of my involvement in translational research and the difficulty of recruiting enough patients for disease-specific studies in the United States. Of course, the gradually increasing investment in biomedical research by the Chinese government was a positive consideration during the decision-making process.

Q: What is your career goal?

A: I want to be a doctor who can develop novel ways to diagnose and treat patients. A physician scientist doing translational research would be ideal; but, I do believe basic research leads to breakthroughs in the clinical management of patients. I always will be chasing the mechanisms underlying disease phenotypes or new therapies.

Q: What is your plan after going back to China?

A: I want to bring the training I received in the United States to China and implement world-class standards in translational research in the hospitals. I am fully aware of the difficulty associated with changing an existing system. It might be easier for those of us who trained outside of China to setup a new research system that would gradually integrate some of the other labs or research institutes.

Q: What advice would you give to our postdoctoral fellows?

A: First, choose your career wisely. If you do not like biomedical research, you can either quit early to restart early, or use it to pay the bills while finding a career you really enjoy. Complaining about your career will never solve the problem. The second suggestion is to always do cutting edge and unique work so you are irreplaceable. Third — communication, communication, communication. Your career can only advance when you learn how to communicate science appropriately. Talk more to your boss and your peers.

Q: What is the best part of your research training?

A: I have several very good mentors. All of them happen to be New Yorkers. They are all different and not perfect; but, I am learning lessons that I apply to every single research project as well as how I live a successful life.

Q: What have you learned from your research?

A: Eighty six percent of experiments fail (quoting statistics from Dr. Bob Tijan, if I remember correctly). How you deal with these “failures” is very important. You need to think what the next step is when you are not that lucky. This process is also called troubleshooting or even more precisely RE-search. You need to work on the solutions instead of feeling like a failure.

Q: What is the most important characteristic for a great scientist?

A: Be bold and creative? I believe every great scientist has his/her own greatness.

Q: What should postdocs pay attention to besides bench work during their training?

A: Again, learning to be a great communicator should be an important, if not the most important, goal for fellows during their training. Good writing and presenting skills will go a long way. You should talk about science with PIs and anyone around you. People in your groups - your peers -

will be your life-long scientific partners. It also is very important to collaborate with others.

In conclusion, Dr. Wei is a great example of a successful transition from PhD student to independent PI. Someone may argue he is lucky in having good mentors and colleagues. However, Pasteur said, “Chance favors only the prepared mind.” From this interview, we can learn and prepare well to advance our career.

VFC–Brown Bag Session II International Funding Opportunities for Visiting Fellows *Grants and Fellowships from the Fogarty International Center, NIH*

By Ravikiran Yedidi, PhD

The Visiting Fellows Committee–Brown Bag (VFC-BB) series was designed with a goal to identify critical topics that are of interest to the visiting fellow community at the NIH. The first session of this series, held in April 2013, focused on immigration issues. The VFC-BB session II was held on June 28, 2013 at the NIH-Bethesda campus and focused on international funding opportunities for visiting fellows after their training at the NIH. For more details on VFC-BB session I, please see an article by Dr. Mishra in the summer issue of the VFC newsletter.



Dr. Kenneth Bridbord (left) and Dr. James Herrington (right).

The VFC-BB session II hosted two speakers from the Fogarty International Center (FIC)-NIH, Drs. Kenneth Bridbord (acting deputy director) and James Herrington (director, Division of International Relations). This session was planned and organized by a team - constituted of executive members of the VFC - led by Ravi Yedidi (NCI) and Huichun Xu (NHGRI) under the guidance of Dr. Shawn Mullen (OITE). This session was well attended and more than 80% attendees had pre-registered.

The session started with an overview, by Dr. Herrington, of the FIC-NIH sponsored grants and fellowships. "FIC is one of the 24 institutes that award grants among the institutes at NIH", said Dr. Herrington. After briefly discussing a few statistics of the NIH intramural and extramural funding mechanisms, he gave an introduction about the Rhode Island congressman (D) Mr. John Edward Fogarty (1913 – 1967) followed by a description of the evolution of the John E. Fogarty International Center, the current FIC at the NIH.

While giving a perspective of funding from the FIC vs. the NIH, Dr. Herrington compared the fiscal year 2012 budgets of the FIC (\$70 million) and the NIH (\$32 billion: intramural (16%) + extramural (84%)). He said that more than 70% of the FIC's budget is for funding the research grants in different countries while less than 30% is spent on research and training. He gave three examples of the FIC research and training programs at foreign institutes: 1) the Fogarty HIV Research Training Program for low- and middle-income country institutions, 2) the Korean Visiting Scientist Training Fellowship Award, and 3) the Global Health Research and Research Training eCapacity Initiative. Dr. Bridbord discussed the Fogarty HIV Research Training Program in more details.

Dr. Herrington concluded his presentation by presenting the World RePORT, an international funding database and map which can be found at <http://worldreport.nih.gov/>. The World RePORT is a comprehensive web-based database that maps the FIC-grantees on the globe using an interactive map on the basis of the country as well as the

funding agency information. Before opening the floor for questions, Dr. Herrington quickly outlined the four major contributors - NCI, NHLBI, NIAID, and NIMH - that are part of the current NIH Research and Training Programs for Foreign Institutions. He then explained how to navigate the FIC website to find the different programs listed above.

During the Q&A session, both Drs. Bridbord and Herrington emphasized that it is the visiting fellows' responsibility to find the programs that are available from their home country that participate in the FIC-related training programs (details can be found online). While answering one of the questions, Bridbord and Herrington clarified that countries like India that have re-entry programs (such as the Ramalingaswamy Fellowship from the Department of Biotechnology, India) may not qualify for certain FIC-programs. Regarding the process of choosing the host institution, they said that visiting fellows must choose the host institution in their home country and not in another country.

For further information on the FIC-sponsored grant programs and funding opportunities, please contact FIC at ficinfo@nih.gov.

For further information on the VFC-BB Series or for more information on the upcoming sessions/topics, please visit us online at https://www.training.nih.gov/vfc_brown_bag_series or contact Ravi Yedidi at yedidirs@mail.nih.gov.

Science Voices from Home Health Sciences Research Support at FAPESP, Brazil

By Hui Geng, PhD

Where to go after training at the NIH is always a big question for most visiting fellows. The Visiting Fellows Committee has set up a series of "Science Voices from Home" (SVH) seminars, providing

general ideas on job opportunities and grant situations all over the world. On June 24, 2013, Dr. Carlos H. de Brito Cruz, scientific director of São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP), was invited to give a videoconference to NIH fellows to discuss career and grant opportunities in the state of São Paulo, Brazil.

Dr. Brito Cruz began by briefly introducing FAPESP and the state of São Paulo, Brazil. FAPESP, a public foundation, has a mission to provide grants, funds, and programs supporting research. FAPESP was initiated in 1962 and is funded by 1% of all São Paulo state tax revenues. With approximately 41 million inhabitants, São Paulo is the most populous state in Brazil, responsible for 34% of the Brazilian gross national product and 50% of its science. Three state universities, 19 state institutes, and 52 technology faculties are located there. The state of São Paulo provides great support to the research and development (R&D), which public support comes largely (65%) from state sources. The annual budget of FAPESP increases yearly. In 2011, total expenditures reached \$938 million. Although FAPESP has provided monetary assistance in all fields, the majority of its expenditures support health sciences (27.2%) and biology research (17.3%).

Dr. Brito Cruz was very optimistic with the blossoming science in Brazil. In 2010, the number of international scientific articles published by Brazil was five times greater than in 1995. To date, Brazil's increased publication rate is third in the world, just behind China and South Korea. The state of São Paulo is very active in health science research with three state universities as well as one federal university containing medical schools supporting research - University of São Paulo (USP), University of Campinas (Unicamp), University of the State of São Paulo (Unesp), and Federal University of São Paulo (Unifesp). Cancer hospitals and research institutes, such as Butantan Institute, provide additional opportunities for researchers working in the health sciences. FAPESP has also made other efforts to stimulate research by offering grants of up to 11 years to bring researchers from abroad to excellence

centers in São Paulo. So far, 17 excellence centers on research, innovation, and science communication have been selected; of these, eight centers are devoted to the health sciences. FAPESP has been very successful in attracting the attention of scientists. In 2012, FAPESP received 21,000 proposals; approximately 5,000 applications were in the health sciences. The average decision time for a proposal peer review is 65 days and, in general, 50% of the proposals could be approved. Although there is competition, the success rate is relatively high!

In the last part of his talk, Dr. Brito Cruz focused on three main opportunities for foreign scientists working in São Paulo: postdoctoral fellowships, Young Investigator Awards, and R&D in industry. The three-to-five year FAPESP postdoctoral fellowship is designed for outstanding researchers with a recent doctorate degree and a good publication record. The stipend includes moving, traveling, and set-up expenses as well as 15% of research incidentals. FAPESP is looking forward to supporting candidates from all over the world. In 2012, FAPESP received 1,521 fellowship applications and 830 cases were approved. Thus more than half of the candidates were offered positions! One can look for open positions at <http://www.fapesp.br/oportunidades/en> or directly contact a supervisor to submit a proposal. For more information, please see <http://www.fapesp.br/en/postdoc>.

The Young Investigator Award is part of FAPESP's strategy to strengthen the state research power, favoring the creation of new research groups. The start-up package is a 4-year grant, with a typical value ranging from \$200,000 to \$2 million. Like most other countries, this package supports an investigator's salary, equipment, consumables, travel, and fellowship for students. Since 1996, FAPESP has received 2,922 proposals and approved 1,016 awards. Therefore, there is a very fair chance to be granted. See more about it at <http://www.fapesp.br/en/4479>.

There are two sets of opportunities for those who are interested in working in industry in the state of São Paulo. One is the Small Business Innovation

Research (SBIR)-like program; the other one is the Joint University-Industry Research. The applicant has the flexibility to choose either a certain company to partner with or use FAPESP-industry calls to find a company for collaboration.

In addition, FAPESP provides joint research funding on international agreements with foreign funding agencies, universities, and companies. Between 2005 and 2010, 242 joint proposals were supported; for example, 85 cases were collaborations with France, 52 cases with the US, 39 cases with Germany, 20 cases with the UK. For more information describing career and grant opportunities in the state of São Paulo, Brazil, please visit the FAPESP newsletter in English at <http://revistapesquisa.fapesp.br/en/revista/edicoes-antiores/> and <http://agencia.fapesp.br/en>.

Science Voices from Home Research Opportunities in Japan

By Dr. Tania R Lombo and
Sanghamitra Mishra, PhD

The Visiting Fellows' Committee hosted a special event on May 21, 2013, under the series 'Science Voices from Home', that featured research opportunities in Japan. Ms Fumiyo Kaneko, deputy director at the Washington office of Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), was invited as a speaker. She spoke about research positions and funding opportunities in Japan for aspiring fellows. Ms Kaneko informed us that the JSPS is now Japan's leading research funding agency, responsible for distributing more than 50% of the research funding allotted by the Japanese Council for Science and Technology Policy (JCSTP). Its mission is to place all the scientific fields on their portfolio and provide the maximum opportunity for international Japanese researchers. Its primary mission is to support

scientific research by disbursing competitive funds like 'Grants-in-Aid', to foster young researchers by providing fellowships, and to promote international co-operation through partnering with overseas funding agencies.

To fulfill its mission, JSPS offers a variety of fellowship programs designed to support the researchers at different career stages and provide incentive to go to Japan. Among these programs, JSPS offers postdoctoral fellowships to invite promising young researchers from other countries to Japan for up to two years. It supports their roundtrip international airfare, monthly maintenance, and settling-in allowance. Fellows are also eligible to apply for a research grant in an amount up to three million yen, equivalent to about 30,000 dollars. Ms Kaneko discussed the different types of programs offered like the Postdoctoral Fellowship Program (eligible within six years of obtaining a PhD) and the Invitation Fellowship Program (eligible six years and more beyond obtaining a PhD - assistant professor, associate professor and professor level). In addition, JSPS offers a short term Postdoctoral Fellowship Program - 1 to 12 months - for foreign researchers from the US, Canada, EU countries, Switzerland, Norway, and Russia. The Fogarty International Center (FIC) at the NIH has more information on these fellowships available from JSPS at <http://www.fic.nih.gov/Programs/Info/Pages/jspsextramural.aspx>. Interested fellows can also contact Ms. Mili Ferreira for guidance. She is the point of contact for JSPS fellowships at Fogarty and can be reached at mili.ferreira@nih.gov or (301) 496-1653.

The JSPS has 88 overseas counterpart institutions in 45 countries and 2 international organizations and operates through 10 overseas offices in 9 countries. Their Washington office is located at 2001 L Street NW, Suite 1050, Washington, DC 20036. Established in 1990 with the purpose of disseminating and gathering information on science in the US, JSPS is engaged in organizing symposia, meetings, and research networking activities, and supporting the overseas outreach activities of Japanese universities. This office

annually hosts a “Science in Japan” forum on selected topics, which is attended by researchers, administrators, and foreign funding agencies. The JSPS alumni association has about 650 members and holds annual meetings sponsored by JSPS. The JSPS fellows around the DC area network through activities sponsored by the JSPS and posted at <http://www.jspsusa.org/>. Moreover, the Washington office also provides information on Japanese academic activities through newsletters and its website, promotes network building among participants, and recommends ‘BRIDGE fellows’ to JSPS. The BRIDGE Fellowship Program is provided exclusively for regular members of officially established JSPS alumni associations who have conducted research activities in Japan under JSPS. It gives them an opportunity to create, sustain and/or strengthen research collaborations with Japanese colleagues. One of the main issues for foreign scientists coming to Japan is the language/cultural barrier and JSPS is exploring ways to improve the quality for international postdoctoral researchers during their stay in Japan. Ms Kaneko also informed us about programs for Outbound Young Japanese researchers like Postdoctoral Fellowship for Research Abroad, the JSPS Kaitoku-NIH Fellowship at the NIH for Japanese Biomedical and Behavior Researchers and Strategic Young Researcher Overseas Visits Program, among others.

There was also an introduction to other agencies like Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) and different programs offered by agencies under JST. Precursory Research for Embryonic Science and Technology (PRESTO), which comes under JST, invites research proposals every year, focusing on green innovation—developing eco-friendly technologies, Life Innovation—Technology for Medical Applications and Information and Communication Technology. The proposal announcement comes in April and applications are due in June. The applications undergo a primary screening and applicants are notified in July-August, after which proposals undergo a second round of review. Successfully reviewed and selected research proposals are ready for research commencement around October.

We also learned about the Japan Research Career Information Network (JREC-IN), which assists researchers in exploring career opportunities in Japan. It provides free information to researchers seeking careers and public job openings in the industrial, academic, and public sectors. One can avail this information by registering at <http://jrecin.jst.go.jp/seek/SeekTop?ln=1>.

This event was an informative session for both Japanese and fellows of other nationalities, looking for opportunities in Japan and Ms Kaneko, in her talk, very kindly provided details of various funding opportunities and useful links for research in Japan for fellows.

NIH-INDIA Group and International Day at the NIH Children’s Inn A Heartwarming Success

By Ravikiran Yedidi, PhD

The association of Indian fellows at the NIH (NIH-INDIA), in collaboration with the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS), organized and participated in the International Day event at the Children’s Inn at the NIH on June 18, 2013. This event was organized by volunteers from four national groups at the NIH: Columbia, India, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. This article is mainly focused on the NIH-INDIA group.

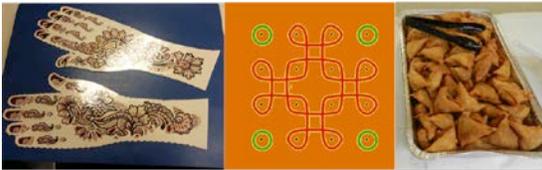
International Day was planned with families in mind, particularly children. Children could pick up a passport containing four pages, with each page dedicated to each of the four countries mentioned above. The child would then visit each table/country group present at the event to learn about the culture/tradition/history of that country and obtain a stamp in their “passport” from each country.



Ravi Yedidi, PhD

A team of six volunteers from the NIH-INDIA group, lead by Ravi Yedidi, PhD, a postdoctoral fellow from NCI, planned and organized this event, along with the help of SACNAS officers. NIH-INDIA showed off time-

honored Indian traditions, culture and taste by designing activities for kids such as Mehndi (removable tattoos), Rangoli (traditional Indian art), Rakhi (Indian wrist bands), etc. as well as Indian food such as samosas, daal, rice, and biryani.



Mehndi, Rangoli and Samosa

In my opinion, this is the most heartwarming success the NIH-INDIA group has achieved after our popular “Junior Talent Show” – a show we organized in December 2012, which also focused mainly on children. As the team lead of International Day, I am very happy that our efforts paid off, and am extremely pleased to hear the comments from each volunteer as highlighted below.



Neetu Kalra, PhD

“My experience with the Children’s Inn event was just overwhelming. I thoroughly enjoyed talking with kids and with their families about Indian culture. More than that, bringing a smile on their

faces made my day” said, Dr. Neetu Kalra, PhD, a postdoctoral fellow from NCI.



Arunima Ghosh, MBBS, PhD

Dr. Arunima Ghosh, MBBS, PhD, a pathologist in training at the NCI said, “The International Night at the Children’s Inn was a

unique experience. Being a pathologist in-training, I don’t get to put faces to names. That night, at the Children’s Inn, every name had a face; every smile on those faces gave my life and profession a new meaning. Thank you, dear children! Thank you Ravi and NIH-INDIA for letting me be a part of this event.”



Saima Rafique, MD

Dr. Saima Rafique, MD, a research-volunteer from the NIH Clinical Center, said, “Participating in the Children’s Inn International event was a

very enriching experience for me. I felt proud to be given the opportunity to represent the rich, diverse and vibrant Indian culture. The enthusiasm with which children, their families and the Children’s Inn staff welcomed us and participated in the events was very heart-warming and encouraging. I would like to thank everyone at the Children’s Inn for the love and appreciation we received.”



Chandni Patel, MPS

“Volunteering at the International Day event and sharing cultural experiences with the families was an absolute joy! As an employee in the non-clinical side of the NIH, this was a great way for me

to connect to our agency on a more personal level” said Miss Chandni Patel, MPS, a diversity and inclusion specialist from the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management, NIH.



Prabha Chandrasekaran, PhD

Dr. Prabha Chandrasekaran, PhD, a postdoctoral fellow from the NIAID said, “It felt great to put together the

most exciting aspects of my culture for the children and their families. It was interesting to see the inquisitiveness of the children and was very delightful to see these children of various ethnicities wearing the decorations associated with Indian culture such as Henna, Bindi and Rakhi! It

was quite an experience of sharing, an experience that imparted a deeper insight to my own culture!”

The NIH-INDIA group thanks the SACNAS officers and the Children’s Inn at the NIH for such a wonderful opportunity.

For more information about NIH-INDIA, please visit us online at www.nihindia.com.

Visiting Fellow’s Life: European Embassy Events

By Urvashi Ramphul, PhD

As summer is drawing to an end, I am amazed by the number of events that has kept me entertained around the DC area. One of the events that I thoroughly enjoyed includes the Shortcut to Europe: European Union Embassies’ Open House this past May. This is a yearly celebration of European culture where the embassies of the European Union and the delegation of the European Union to the United States open their doors to the general public, offering a rare glimpse at a variety of cultures, aptly called, ‘experience the best of European culture without the jet lag.’ This is an excellent opportunity to visit the European Union headquarters and the embassies of 28 nations participating in the European Union Embassies tour and admission is free. Participating embassies this year included: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom. There were complimentary shuttle buses along the embassy routes.

The day was filled with fun for the whole family, food, music, tours, and culture. It provided an opportunity to experience a country’s traditions, heritage and was filled with various family activities.

My day started at the British embassy, and I quickly learned the array of British trade, business, and art. The embassy also showcased the ambassador’s residence and gardens. I gladly took the opportunity to sample some British food including some delicious sticky toffee pudding.

My next stop was at the embassy of Belgium where I wandered around the spectacular residences in Brussels and their architecture through an exhibition ‘The Cradle of Art Nouveau: Victor Horta and Brussels.’ I learned about Belgian culture and sampled Belgian waffles, chocolate, bread, and other specialties. I also caught a glimpse of traditional Latvian dancers in their traditional outfits outside the embassy of Latvia.

This is an excellent free event promoting European month of culture and I highly recommend it for next year. For those interested in countries other than Europe, there is also an ‘Around the World Embassy Tour’ in May with more than 40 embassies in six continents opening their doors to experience art, food, dance, music, and fashion of different countries around the world. This is also certainly a must-see event and experience!

Career Tools: Fellows Award for Research Excellence (FARE)

By Urvashi Ramphul, PhD

The Fellows Award for Research Excellence (FARE), which began in 1995, provides an opportunity for intramural postdoctoral fellows at the NIH to be recognized for their exceptional scientific research. The award is sponsored by the NIH Fellows Committee (Felcom), the scientific directors, and the NIH Office of Intramural Training & Education (OITE) and is funded by the scientific directors. Submission for abstracts opens in March each year and abstracts are peer reviewed

anonymously. Winners receive a stipend of \$1,000 to attend a scientific conference of their choice, where they present their abstracts as a poster or seminar.

The application and judging process is as follows. First, postdoctoral fellows prepare abstracts reflecting their own research carried out at the NIH and submit these abstracts online. The data must be recent and either unpublished, submitted, accepted, in press, or published in that year. Abstracts have to be approved by the fellow's mentor. All identifying information such as the applicant's name and research group is removed from approved abstracts. Abstracts are then placed into one of over 50 study sections and judged anonymously by a panel of five scientists at the NIH, including three postdoctoral fellows and two tenure-track or staff scientists. If a judge recognizes an abstract, or has a conflict of interest, the abstract is reviewed by an alternate judge. The abstracts are evaluated based on the following criteria: scientific merit, originality, experimental design, and overall quality or presentation. They are then ranked based on the quality of the evaluation. The top 25% abstracts from each study section are then selected as the FARE winners. In addition to winning the travel award, winners are asked to present their work the day of the FARE presentation ceremony.

The FARE provides an excellent opportunity for postdoctoral fellows to be recognized for their groundbreaking research carried out at the NIH. The FARE also offers other opportunities for postdoc fellows to develop additional skills. FARE winners from previous years can serve as judges. This year, I had the opportunity to be a chief judge. As a judge, this gave me the opportunity to both critically evaluate other abstracts and view the variety of research executed on the NIH campus. As a chief judge, the FARE application process gave me a chance to put my organization skills to the test. I had to ensure that all the judges on my team met the judging deadline and reached a consensus about which abstracts were in the top 25%. Applications for FARE judges are also accepted online for staff, tenure-track scientists,

and postdoctoral fellows volunteering to judge a specific category.

The FARE process is rewarding to both the postdoctoral fellow applicants and the judges, providing great learning tools on how to tailor abstracts for a general audience and how to critically evaluate each other's work. This award is open every year in case you missed it this year, and you can apply to be an applicant, a judge, or both!

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Looking for Leadership Opportunities?

Be a part of an organization that is:

Dedicated to building community amongst NIH's diverse fellow population;

Committed to helping bring career building resources and events;

Be a voice regarding issues that are 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.

National Institutes of Health Visiting Fellows Committee

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