



NIH VFC Newsletter 2013 Summer Edition

Contributing to global science development by building careers

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VFC Brown Bag Series

First Series: Immigration & Employment in the US

By Sanghamitra Mishra, PhD

The Visiting Fellows Committee (VFC) started its Brown Bag Series this year. This aims to be an informal series of talks by host speakers with expert opinions on topics concerning visiting fellows, such as immigration, funding, and jobs among others. The inaugural session took place on April 26th, where the Division of International Services Director, Mr. Candelario Zapata, was the guest speaker. He spoke on “Employment in the US” and addressed questions from visiting fellows intending to stay in the US to continue research after completing their training.

Visiting fellows face a fair number of challenges when it comes to navigating the US immigration system. Not only do they come for training on time-limited non-immigrant visas but there are also institute-specific rules, like the 5/8 year rule, which restricts a fellow’s length of time occupying a particular position. To continue working in the US after this time, fellows need to change their immigration status. Immigration issues can be daunting and an expert opinion is invaluable. Mr. Zapata explained the different immigration statuses and gave detailed instructions for the status change processes. Considering that each step has timelines and possible delays, he emphasized the importance of planning ahead. Also, keeping records of accomplishments, such as a letter to review a manuscript, or awards and recognitions, come to be very important when filing immigrant visa petitions (i.e., Form I-140 of the H-1 visa application). An application with a diverse set of achievements (e.g., publications, awards, memberships, etc...) and not only publications has a higher value.

Most visiting fellows come to the NIH on J-1 visas and seek to change to an H-1 when offered sponsorship (see related article in this issue). While seeking H-1 status for employment outside

of the NIH, a job offer letter is necessary to apply for the waiver of the two-year home residence requirement (section 212e under the US Immigration and Nationality Act) as well as a favorable review from the NIH. The DIS holds seminars on waivers twice a year.

Because there are only a limited number of H-1B visas available per year for private industry, ‘H-1B portability’ must be considered carefully by candidates transitioning from a non-cap institution (university) to one that is subject to this cap (private employer). While in J-1 (non-immigrant) status, one must also carefully plan international travel with appropriate guidance. If one is traveling outside the U.S. while on J-1 status with a pending I-140, it can lead to complications when re-entering the U.S. A J-1 visa is issued because there is no immigration intent; filing an I-140 shows otherwise. Generally, the feasibility of re-entry to the U.S. must be considered before traveling.

Many visiting fellows wish to stay in the US to obtain employment after their training. When a status change application is being filed with the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), employers will be taking note of the time of application, financial status, evidence of lawful stay, fulfillment of 212e, and credentials for eligibility, which must all be backed by evidence. Mr. Zapata provided a list of immigration related questions that might come up during a job interview, including the candidate’s authorization to work in their current status and whether they need a status change or sponsorship. It is important for the candidate, in turn, to discuss the support they can expect from the potential employer to obtain work authorization, sponsorship and also to get information on relevant employer policies. The Office of Intramural Training & Education (OITE) offers substantial help and resources for fellows on preparing for a job interview.

Mr. Zapata discussed Lawful Permanent Residence (LPR), or Green Card processing (see related article in this issue) and the different bases for applying for it. Employment-based applications are the most relevant to visiting

fellows. Depending on what LPR category is applied for, a job offer may be needed (i.e., Outstanding Researcher and Program Electronic Review Management petitions). These applications are usually processed through the new employer. Petitions that do not require a job (i.e., National Interest Waiver and Extraordinary Ability) can be filed by the individual or new employer. One can simultaneously file for both the job-required and the no-job-offer-required type petition. Family-based petitions can also be processed by individuals through eligible sponsoring family members.

While answering questions from the audience, Mr. Zapata briefly discussed the exceptional 'Extensions beyond Five Years for J-1 Exchange Visitors' in the G-7 Program. Mr. Zapata informed the audience about some basic immigration changes to be introduced this year, like the phasing out of paper I-94 forms while transitioning to an electronic system. He also reiterated some basic rules about maintaining your lawful status, such as not overstaying the limit on your visa. Violation of immigration status, unauthorized work, crimes of 'moral turpitude' like reckless driving, all affect consideration of LPR applications. Apart from affecting status change applications, violation of these rules may also result in serious consequences.

The Brown Bag series has made a good start with Mr. Zapata's talk. It is a recommended series for all visiting fellows. (Content Approved by DIS)

Immigration Update

The Green Card Lottery

Trying Your Luck

By Jennifer L Sargent, PhD

The green card remains a holy grail to many foreign nationals who want to live and work in the United States on a permanent basis. There are many avenues for obtaining a green card, some of which were covered by Candelario Zapata, Director of the Division of International Services,

at the recent Brown Bag lecture, and are reported elsewhere in this issue. The Diversity Immigrant Visa Program, DV lottery, more commonly known as the "green card lottery," is a cost-effective, lawyer-free route to obtain a coveted green card that can free you from some of the limitations that are applied to living and working in the US on non-immigrant visa status.

The DV lottery was established in 1990 as a means to increase the diversity of the immigrant pool coming to the US. It provides individuals and their families with a rare opportunity to immigrate to the US with minimal requisites. Winners must fulfill minimal education or work requirements, and have no criminal record. While 55, 000 successful applications each year may seem like a lot, DV lottery green cards account for only 5% of legal immigrants annually, and last year were drawn from a pool of around eight million entries.

Here, I will discuss some of the lessons I have learned over the past six months, having "won" the lottery myself recently. I will clarify some myths surrounding the lottery process that I, and others, have encountered along the way. This is intended only as a brief summary of the process and timeline, and in no way should be interpreted as legal immigration advice.

Myth 1: Anyone can enter the lottery. For visiting fellows at the NIH, the minimum high school education requirement, or work-related experience is clearly met. However, it is important to know that entry into the lottery is not entirely open to everyone. Citizens of countries that have already reached their maximal quota of immigrants to the US over the past five years are excluded from the DV lottery. Some countries on this list include the United Kingdom, India, and China. For a full list of excluded countries, visit the US State Department website.

Once you have established your eligibility, make sure you have a digital picture that fits the specified requirements, enter in your information, then sit back and start the waiting game. Believe me, win or lose – there will be a lot of waiting!

Myth 2: The State Department will notify winners. The first round of winners are selected in May of the year of the lottery, and entrants must check back at the website to see if they have been selected. It is very important that you keep a copy of your confirmation number that you received when you entered the lottery. You will need this to check the status of your entry online.

If you were not selected in May, you might still be a winner. A second round of selections is released in October. So keep your number and do not forget to check back on the website. I have to confess that the only reason I remembered to check my 2013 entry again was because I was logging on to enter for the 2014 applicant pool! I lucked out on this one – who knows if I'd won in previous years and just never checked?

Myth 3: Winning the DV lottery automatically guarantees you a green card. In the 2013 DV lottery, approximately 115, 000 applicants were selected for further processing, but in reality only 55, 000 visas and subsequent green cards will be issued. Each winner is given a place in a visa queue and must then wait for their visa number to become available. Visa numbers are released monthly and can be found on the State Department visa bulletin, which is published on the 15th of each month. When your assigned visa number becomes available you will be able to continue with the application process. It is important to note that you must have received your visa, or approval of your change of status, by September 30 of the year in which you are applying. The State Department closes the door on the lottery after this date so the next DV lottery can be opened up for applications.

Each October, the DV lottery accepts electronic entries for a period of one month. Mail-in applications are no longer accepted. For specific dates and additional information, please refer to the State Department website: <http://travel.state.gov/visa/immigrants/types/types1318.html>.

Additionally, the Division of International Services at NIH also provides some information for visiting fellows interested in entering the DV

lottery:

<http://dis.ors.od.nih.gov/advisories/technicaladvisory22.pdf>.

If you think this process might be an option for you to get a green card, check back on the website regularly to find out when entries for the 2015 DV lottery are being accepted.

Good luck! (Content Approved by DIS)

Where are they now? Overcoming Immigration Challenges

Long-term Employment at the NIH

By Khyati Kapoor, PhD

Do you wonder about long-term research positions at the NIH? Would you like to know more about how the NIH can help you with immigration matters in such a situation? If so, please read on to learn more about how two visiting fellows were successful in their transition to staff scientist position and green card application with the NIH.

For many of us who come to the NIH on a J-1 visa, the question of where to go after our postdoctoral fellowship means facing additional challenges in terms of immigration. Job hunting is a very challenging process and sometimes we may not even be able to apply for our dream job because our immigration status makes us ineligible. Many postdoctoral visiting fellows choose to transition to a research fellow position within the NIH to get more time to hone their scientific aptitude required to handle the responsibilities of an independent investigator. Many feel that this also buys more time to file for U.S. permanent residency before jumping into the process of finding a real job. Since the NIH has such excellent resources and a highly collaborative environment, most of us would like a long-term career within the NIH. I interviewed two NIH staff scientists who started as visiting fellows and chose to continue at the NIH.

With a background in pharmaceutical sciences, Dr. Suneet Shukla received his Ph.D. in life sciences from India and joined the Laboratory of Cell Biology in 2004. His transition to a staff scientist at the NCI took him six years, starting as a visiting fellow with a J-1 visa, moving to a research fellow, and then to a staff scientist. The transitions involved several adjustments to his visa classification. He obtained his H-1B visa from his transition to a research fellow position and thus a waiver from the 212e (the two-year home country physical presence requirement) rule. Very soon afterwards, a staff scientist position opened within his laboratory. Once his appointment was approved, his green card filing began and a Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) request was sent to the Division of International Services (DIS) at the NIH to initiate the process.

At the NIH, immigrant visas are filed only for permanent full-time positions. Once a request is initiated, DIS sends back a questionnaire, requesting information about the candidate's scientific achievements. A committee – which meets every month – determines whether the accomplishments of the candidate qualify him or her for the position in question. DIS reviews these assessments very closely and makes a decision on a case-by-case basis. Then, DIS decides whether to proceed with a filing under either an EB1A or an EB2 category (the NIH does not file immigrant visa petitions under the EB1B category due to immigration regulations). DIS can also suggest waiting and building up the credentials of a candidate if the committee does not find his or her case to be strong enough. DIS receives, prepares, and files around ten immigrant visa requests each year with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Dr. Shukla's case was filed under the EB1A category. He considers himself lucky to have found an open research position and been able to stay in the same lab all along.

Dr. Philip Lee's journey to staff scientist followed a different path. After receiving his Ph.D. in Scotland, he joined the NIH as a visiting fellow on a J-1 visa and then continued as a research fellow on an H-1B visa. It was when he transitioned to a

staff scientist position after 6 years as a research fellow that an LPR request was sent for him. However, DIS considered his case only for an O-1 visa due to the lack of time in hand to go ahead with the LPR processing. After his O-1 visa approval came through, he sent in an LPR request again a year later. His case was then chosen by DIS as a better fit for the EB2 category filing.

The above mentioned cases are considered self-petitions; but due to the importance of the scientific work of the researchers, the NIH prepared and filed the petitions on their behalf.

The entire process from the “concept approval” of the position to getting his permanent resident status “took about one year,” Dr. Shukla said. He collected all the personal and professional detailed information required for filing and then DIS made the case for the actual petition. It took him seven months to get LPR status. On the other hand, it took 18 months for Dr. Lee to get his permanent residence. “Time varies from case-to-case and is subject to USCIS processing times,” DIS says.

These two examples may help us learn about opportunities within the NIH which are not restricted to visiting fellows based on their visa status. More details about the LPR process can be found at <http://dis.ors.od.nih.gov/faq.aspx>.

- J-1** = Exchange visitor visa
- 212e** = Two-year home country physical presence requirement rule
- H-1B** = Non-immigrant specialized worker visa
- EB1A** (Employment-Based immigration 1A) = Alien of extraordinary ability
- EB1B** (Employment-based immigration 1B) = Outstanding researcher
- EB2 or NIW** (Employment-based immigration 2 or National Interest Waiver) = Second preference
- O-1** = Individuals with extraordinary ability or achievement (Content Approved by DIS)

Where are they now? A Successful Transition from Academia to Industry

Handling Visa Issues

By Khyati Kapoor, PhD and
Hui Geng, PhD

Dr. Kathrina Quinn has recently made the transition to industry after successfully completing her postdoctoral training at the NIH. She was one of the panelists at the sixth annual NIH Career Symposium where she shared her experience in transitioning from academia to industry. This perspective could be a guiding light for many of us who are close to moving on from a postdoctoral position or are at the stage of choosing a career away from the bench.

Dr. Kathrina Quinn, your transition from the NIH to industry is a very encouraging example for visiting fellows. Would you mind sharing your background and career path with us?

I joined the Molecular Physiology and Therapeutics Branch, NIDCR as a postdoctoral visiting fellow after receiving my Ph.D. from Dublin, Ireland. I stayed at the NIH for five years. Then, about two years ago, I joined Decision Resources, a biotechnology company in Burlington, Massachusetts, as a research analyst. Considering that I was on a J-1 visa, the transition to industry was relatively smooth but it involved a continuous and persistent effort for a long time.

When did you join the NIH and at what stage did you start thinking about transitioning to industry?

I joined the NIH in October of 2006 and started thinking about transitioning somewhere at the end of the third year of my postdoc. Since my fellowship at the NIH was eventually going to end, I had to choose a career path. During my fellowship, I realized industry was a better fit for my career objectives. At the very beginning of my job search, I was unsure what kind of industry jobs

were best suited for my career goals, which resulted in a passive and unfocused job search. After six months of searching, what I wanted became clearer and I started a more aggressive job hunt.

How did you prepare to be competitive for an industry position? What resources did you use to find this current position?

In addition to my research, I used to participate in several non-bench activities. I served as an NIH Visiting Fellows Committee (VFC) representative for Ireland and as the VFC website administrator. I also served on the NIH Career Symposium Steering Committee. I attended NIH business development graduate classes entitled “Biomedical Business Development for Scientists” and “Marketing Strategies for Scientific Organizations” to stay competitive. I would look for positions on various job portals but, interestingly, Decision Resources was mentioned by a family member in a casual discussion. When I looked it up, it so happened that there was an open position and I applied directly on the company’s website. My application consisted of a resume and a cover letter. Not much networking was involved in getting this current job.

As a visa holder, not a permanent resident, did your job hunt seem more difficult?

Yes, as a visa holder, the job hunt was difficult. There were many positions for which I was not even eligible to apply due to visa restrictions. In my experience, I never heard back from most of the companies when I applied online. I assume that my visa status must have hampered my job search and the response from the employers. I had almost reached a point where I was becoming desperate - believe me, it is not easy!!

What is the process of getting a J-1 waiver and how long does it take?

There are several steps involved in obtaining a waiver from the “two-year home country physical presence” requirement. In my case, it took around 10 weeks. After the interviews, when I started getting hints that I was going to be selected, I

proactively prepared and filed my J-1 waiver application. Within a week, I got this job offer and I was all set to go. Two sets of documents were required for this application: one set for the U.S. Department of State (DOS), which also included a DS-3035 online application form, the other set for the Irish embassy in order to get the “No Objection” statement. Once DOS received the “No Objection” statement, the NIH was asked to file a sponsor letter, which required me to provide an official job offer to the Division of International Services. Therefore, do not file your J-1 visa waiver unless you are pretty sure about the job offer.

How did your prospective employer in industry respond to the wait time during the waiver process?

I never mentioned my visa requirements to the hiring manager. I brought it up during my interview with human resources (HR). Fortunately, HR at Decision Resources understood very well the additional time required for a J-1 waiver. Moreover, my J-1 waiver and the H-1B visa were processed together. My company filed the H-1B visa application in premium processing which took eight weeks. There was lots of overlapping waiting time during the J-1 waiver and H-1B visa applications. I was really lucky to have everything arranged in a timely manner.

As a visiting fellow, what timeline should be kept in mind if someone wants to transition to industry?

The earlier, the better. To move into industry, start the job hunt at least one year before your J-1 visa ends and reserve around half a year for the J-1 waiver and H-1B visa applications.

What advice would you give to other visiting fellows who want to transition from academia to industry?

Of course, networking is foremost. Apart from that, I can say from my experience that there are three important points to prepare for a successful transition: planning ahead, tailoring your resume and cover letter to fit the job description, and

keeping your eyes open for positions in small and mid-size companies as well. LinkedIn is a great website for developing and maintaining contacts.

Connecting the World and the NIH through Global Health

By Tania Lombo, PhD.

Recently, I attended the annual meeting of the Consortium of Universities for Global Health (CUGH) in Washington, D.C. As a foreign scientist, I felt encouraged to attend; but many questions came to my mind before going to the talks. Why would the American people invest on health issues in Latin America? Or, why would the Chinese government care about public health necessities in Africa? You might appreciate the rationale of our NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins when he said at this meeting, “Local problems are global problems and global problems are local problems. In other words, domestic is not opposite to global and vice versa.” In this era of globalization, when you can easily make bank transfers with just one click and chat with your parents in India while you are running your experiments here in Maryland, it is not strange to see that the NIH and many other American institutions are not far from this new wave of globalization.

The CUGH was established in 2010 with initial funding from The Bill and Melinda Gates and the Rockefeller Foundations to satisfy the unprecedented interest in Global Health among faculty, government, and students in North America. The 2013 CUGH annual meeting included more than 1,300 participants from 56 nations, and several concurrent sessions covered topics such as fostering of partnerships between developing and first world nations, with the common goal of reducing health disparities everywhere.

I also learned during the meeting that a new era of international partnership is growing on the current

Global Health efforts. According to Dr. Agnes Binagwaho, the Rwandan Health Minister, the era when scientific experts from rich countries stayed briefly in developing countries to conduct their specific research or teach skills is being relegated to the past. She pointed out that people in her country - and many others - spend half their salaries to read the latest scientific articles. "Today's challenge is to overcome the knowledge-implementation gap and breathe life into the solutions we already know will save millions of lives and billions of dollars," said Dr. Keith Martin, CUGH Secretary. CDC Director Dr. Thomas Frieden stressed, "It is vital to expand global health activities as the risks are multiplied by the speed at which pathogens spread around today's interconnected world."

Public health leaders agree that global health problems need a series of coordinated actions between governments, research institutions, advocacy groups, and ministries of health, universities and societies in general. The NIH is a national and international leading actor in global health; many of the NIH institutes have international offices working along with the Intramural and Extramural programs. The NCI and NIAID have dedicated highly trained personnel to administer and oversee international collaborations and develop partnerships with foreign scientists. The Fogarty International Center has a long-standing role at the NIH, supporting basic, clinical and applied research and training for U.S. and foreign researchers working in the developing world. The NHLBI also has an international network of collaborations

I strongly believe contributions from every corner of science policy, research, administration, and education could give concerns in global health a common voice. However, I also see the visiting fellows' community as a silent - but strong - driving force of the NIH's Global Health initiative. How many of us come from low middle income countries, fulfill our training at the NIH, and most probably return home? I believe our eyes and hearts are still looking back and feel responsible for problems left behind as we work here in the U.S. As an NIH fellow, I am concerned about the

science in my own region, Latino America. While I experience the great science done inside the NIH walls, I still understand the unlimited potential and needs of my own region. I only just recently learned about the different offices inside and outside of the NIH dedicated to global health, and they are really developing exciting programs to fight the battles of health disparities and give a sustainable force to the progress of international biomedical research.

Why should we, foreign and national scientists, care about global health? Our world is no longer a world separated by incommensurable oceans not seen on maps as it was in the 14th century, it is an interconnected world where we care about everyone because we are one.

If you would like more information on international research at the NIH, you may visit these websites:

Fogarty International Center (FIC):
<http://www.fic.nih.gov/Pages/Default.aspx>

NCI, Center for Global Health:
<http://www.cancer.gov/aboutnci/globalhealth>

NIAID, Office of Global Research:
<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/about/organization/odoffices/omo/ogr/Pages/default.aspx>

NHLBI, Office of Global Health:
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/globalhealth/>

NIH, The Common Fund, Global Health:
<https://commonfund.nih.gov/globalhealth/>

NICHD, Office of Global Health:
<http://www.nichd.nih.gov/about/org/od/ogh/Pages/index.aspx>

Culture

Why Americans Celebrate 4th of July

By Amie D. Moody, PhD

Summer is a time that Americans associate with trips to the beach, backyard grilling and the occasional fireworks display. No holiday embodies these traditions like the national holiday, 4th of July, also known as Independence Day. But what is the history behind the Independence Day

celebrations? The individual actions and their consequences are too numerous to go into detail, so here is an overview of those events.

The British founded their first permanent colony, Jamestown, on the “new” continent in 1607, in what would later become the state of Virginia. For the settlers who managed to survive the harsh trip across the stormy Atlantic, survival in the Americas was far from easy. Many of the original Jamestown settlers perished from disease, starvation, and conflicts with the Native American tribes. The settlement would not flourish until new settlers arrived two years later.

Eventually, the Thirteen Original Colonies formed under the auspices of the British Empire. Although life was rugged and unrefined by European standards, by the mid-18th century roughly 1.5 million settlers lived in the Colonies. Even though many of them were in relatively close proximity, each of the Colonies often dealt more with London and Great Britain than they did with other Colonies. There were also distinct regional differences. In the Northeast, the large cities were also seaports, and merchants dominated society. In the South, agriculture and large plantations, particularly those that produced tobacco, ruled the local economies.

Despite the growth and advancement of the Colonies, there were tensions between the colonists and the British. Throughout the global Seven Years War, referred to as the French and Indian War in the Colonies, the colonists began to question British motives. During the conflict, British officers distrusted those colonists that would volunteer their services to fight in the war. In most cases, the colonials were rejected from the British military and instead formed a volunteer militia. Several signers of the Declaration of Independence were in fact a part of this militia. One of those was George Washington, Commander-in-Chief and leader of the Continental army, who became the first President of the United States of America.

In the wake of the war, the British enacted several Proclamations and Acts that angered the colonists. The Proclamation of 1763 was the first of these.

The colonists were excited to develop the newly won territory. However, the British blocked colonial expansion into what was already Native American territory. The colonists interpreted this as an excuse to keep their settlements closer to the coast, and therefore easier to rule.

Additionally, Great Britain was in dire need of money after its extensive war efforts. The British passed numerous tax acts, such as The Sugar Act and The Stamp Act, resulting in increased tensions over the next decade. Yet, the British continued imposing more taxes and regulations on the colonists, without giving the colonists representation in the British government. The colonists resented these impositions and rebelled against them.

In the fall of 1774, delegates from 12 of the 13 Colonies convened for the First Continental Congress. All the representatives agreed action against British rule needed to be taken, however it was clear that the Colonies were divided about how to resolve their concerns. Some Colonies thought that a resolution could be reached with Great Britain; other Colonies would have been content with representation in the British government; the third faction wanted complete separation from Great Britain. After weeks of deliberations, the representatives decided to negotiate with Great Britain to resolve their grievances. The Congress agreed to re-convene if no progress had been made to address the colonists’ problems.

Over the next year, relations deteriorated between the British and the colonists. Fighting broke out between the two sides. Although there were some efforts to reconcile, the fighting escalated. Eventually, the colonists felt they had exhausted all other possibilities and formally declared independence from British rule on July 4, 1776. The Revolutionary War continued until the Treaty of Paris was signed on September 3, 1783 and the United States of America was born. Since then, Independence Day has been celebrated every year on the 4th of July. Notably, it did not become a paid holiday until 1938.

To learn more about the events before, during and after the Revolutionary War, I recommend “[Washington: A Life](#)”, by Ron Chernow. The author weaves the life of George Washington into the larger events of the times and describes how Washington helped shape the Revolution and the formative years of the United States. I also used the Independence Hall Association website (www.ushistory.org) for supplemental details. It is a good source for quickly finding information to basic questions about US history. For details about future activities and events in the Washington D.C. area, visit www.dcpages.com/Tourism/Fourth_of_July/. For more information about the National Independence Day Parade, visit www.july4thparade.com.

Science Voices from Home Prof. Flint Gives Insight into UK Funding Institutions

By Martin Lang, PhD

Most Visiting Fellows spend only a few years working at the NIH and their transition to a new position is challenging. To prepare for this transition, fellows should take advantage of the many career development services offered at the NIH. The Visiting Fellows Committee’s “Science Voices from Home” (SVH) project tries to facilitate the transition of the NIH fellows to their home country or another country by providing information on job and funding opportunities as well as career advice and networking opportunities. Regular informal meetings with foreign scientists, organized by the VFC, give visiting fellows the chance to obtain first-hand information about the scientific environment, grants, and research opportunities in a particular country.

On March 12, 2013 Prof. Jonathan Flint from the Wellcome Trust Centre for Human Genetics (Oxford, UK) accepted the invitation from the SVH team to meet with visiting fellows during his

visit to the NIH. Prof. Flint is a leading scientist in the genetics of common psychiatric disorders. His research focuses on the identification of the genetic basis of anxiety and depression.

During the discussion with Dr. Flint, SVH meeting attendees gained valuable insight about grant and research opportunities available in the UK. Dr. Flint outlined that after an initial postdoctoral fellowship, the main avenues for obtaining an academic position in the UK include additional postdoc positions in the lab of an established PI or independent academic positions - funded by the private sector or directly by a university.

Importantly, Prof. Flint considered long-lasting postdoc positions disadvantageous because they are linked to an established PI’s research project(s) making it difficult to obtain funding autonomously. He also mentioned that faculty positions in the UK directly funded by universities are very competitive and most often require teaching. The amount of academic teaching required should therefore be carefully considered when seeking a research-based position.

Within the UK, one of the main funding agencies for individual research projects is the Wellcome Trust (WT), “a global charitable foundation dedicated to achieving extraordinary improvements in health by supporting the brightest minds” (<http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/>). Besides fellowships for scientists at different career levels, the WT grants personalized Investigator Awards that are flexible, allowing the researcher to address important questions about health and disease in a curiosity-driven approach. New Investigator Awards fund independent researchers within the first five years of an academic post, whereas Senior Investigator Awards - more competitive - are given to senior researchers in established academic positions. WT funding promotes independence and frees the grantee to focus on research projects as no teaching is required. Although applicants for WT grants need a prior agreement with an academic institution, valuable candidates very often receive help from that institution in preparing their application package. With a good publication record and a thorough

preparation for the challenging interviews, there is a reasonable chance to be granted a WT Award.

In general, every job search and grant writing process will greatly benefit from having developed a widespread scientific collaboration network. To this purpose, Prof. Flint encouraged the NIH fellows to creatively stimulate their research by collaborating with fellows from different institutes. He launched the idea of organizing regular meetings between fellows belonging to different institutes to discuss original and innovative project proposals. Bringing together researchers working in different fields would encourage interdisciplinary research projects and could boost collaborations, which are two of the main pillars of performing science today.

Career Tools

NIAID Annual Fellows Retreat

Taking the Next Step

By Urvashi Ramphul, PhD

I recently attended the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases' (NIAID) Annual Fellows Retreat, which was sponsored by the Office of Training and Diversity (OTD). This retreat was aimed at guiding NIH fellows in their career choices and teaching how to be competitive in today's job market. This year's theme was titled "Taking the Next Step," a guide in easing the transition from research fellow to the next stage of one's career.

This annual retreat helps fellows with career development through lectures and interactive panel discussions. This retreat brings together NIAID fellows to facilitate social interaction and networking, with the possibility to share experiences and explore the career options available. Various lectures were aimed at preparing fellows for their next career, including a lecture by the Director of the Division of Intramural Research, Dr. Kathryn Zoon, about

what the future holds for biomedical PhD scientists.

There was also a comprehensive talk regarding the use of LinkedIn to find a job. Since the use of social media is crucial in a job search today, LinkedIn serves as a great resource to enhance the prospects of your job search. Many recruiters use social media to find, screen, and hire candidates. The take-home message from this lecture was that building a professional network is very important when looking for a job, particularly at a time when many qualified candidates apply for the same positions. The right network, meaning that you connect with the right people in fields that you are interested in, might help open doors for the next stage of your career. Although many fellows use LinkedIn as a tool, this lecture demonstrated the efficient use of this resource. LinkedIn can be used to share your knowledge, research and articles of interest, and make connections with past and current colleagues, supervisors and other experts in your field of research. To increase your chances of being found on LinkedIn, examples were shown on how to use specific keywords and how to join groups and intermingle within those groups to stand out from the online crowd.

The LinkedIn lecture was followed by two parallel discussion panels about taking the next step either at or beyond the NIH. I attended the latter discussion panel, which featured former NIH fellows who now work across a variety of fields, such as the US Department of State, The Society for Women's Health Research, Booz Allen Hamilton and Deloitte Consulting LLP. The panelists described their daily activities as well as discussed how their career paths led to these positions.

Developing a wide variety of skills was the main take-home message of this retreat. Fortunately, there are many options at the NIH that allow fellows to develop needed skills. One such example includes joining one (or several) of the various committees at the NIH to demonstrate and acquire both leadership and communication skills. Another take-home message was the importance of developing professional networks. This can be

done proactively by finding people, groups or institutes that you are interested in; contacting them; and presenting your interests and skills to them. A great way to network is to connect with potential employers or collaborators at conferences. Overall, this retreat provided great learning tools on how to be competitive and efficiently search for jobs.

Visiting Fellow's life Inspiring Young Scientists in Science Education

*A view from the Post-Baccalaureate
Poster day 2013*

By Ping Chen, MD-PhD

On May 3rd, NIH director Dr. Francis Collins made the important statement that, “we truly have one of the most compelling missions to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce the burdens of illness and disability. Why we do what we do is evident...and how we do what we do is nothing short of inspiring.” To continue developing the NIH mission, it is necessary to inspire the next generation of scientists. The annual NIH Post-Baccalaureate (Postbac) Poster Day is one way to inspire these scientists.

The NIH is a unique place because scientific communication occurs every day on campus. A scientific poster presentation is an effective method to introduce one's own research to the community. Out of all the poster presentations hosted at the NIH, I was particularly attracted to the Postbac Poster Day. I had the idea that I could contribute to the scientific education of young scientists based on my own learning experiences.

I was lucky to be a judge at this year's Postbac Poster Day held at the Natcher Conference Center on May 1st. As a judge, I spoke with several postbacs about their projects. Clearly, the goal of Postbac Poster Day is to help the postbacs gain experience giving presentations that explain their work, and not to put the postbacs on the spot or

challenge them with in-depth scientific questions. One hundred fifty postbacs from 23 NIH institutes/centers participated this year. Topics such as NK cell effector function: Role of Eomes and T-bet; Characterization of regulatory T cells among graft-versus-host disease patients; and Epigenetic regulation of critical genes for CD4⁺ helper lineage commitment covered a broad range of fields from basic to translational science. After seeing the young scientists standing in front of their posters, presenting their data professionally and answering questions appropriately, I felt they genuinely enjoyed their work and dedicated themselves to the research. The postbacs, in general, displayed their understanding of their projects' implications. This experience will likely have a deep impact on their future careers. Some of them may become famous scientists and discover mechanisms of diseases, some of them may become clinicians and treat patients, and some of them may take administrative jobs managing scientific projects.

After talking to the postbacs, I learned that they usually work in the laboratory for one to two years and are expected to present their projects afterwards. They not only learn the techniques in the laboratory but also attend workshops to develop their scientific skills further and improve their graduate or medical school applications. Some of these workshops are aimed at ensuring the postbacs make informed decisions about their future careers.

Additionally, Postbac Poster Day inspires not only the postbac scientists, but also the postdoctoral fellows that serve as judges. Specifically, while judging the posters, I learned something from postbacs. I learned details about how to present more effectively, how to make a poster easy for people to understand, and how to interact with people when they are interested in your research. It was an interesting way to learn compared to how I was taught to present a poster.

Promoting science education is one path towards achieving the NIH mission. I believe Postbac Poster Day is not the only way to inspire young scientists, but it is an effective and successful way

to achieve this inspiration. Inspiring the young scientists today helps improve human health tomorrow!

Visiting Fellow's life How to Beat Boredom over the Summer

Ideas for Active Summer Fun

By Natascia Marino, PhD

How many times have you asked yourself: "What should I do this summer? Where should I go? Is there anything exciting I can do with my friends?" Are you tired of falling asleep to the cicadas' song during the brightest season of the year?

The long, golden summer stretches ahead of you now—three glorious months of sun, heat and beautiful days. It is time to plan some outdoor activities to enjoy the gorgeous days and beat the laziness induced by the heat. You can do many things that don't cost much or require a lot of work. Certainly you may find many ideas on groupon.com, thingstodo.com, and other websites. I am here to tell you what is easily available to the NIH fellows this coming summer.

Sunithi from R&W (Building 31, Room B1W30, Bethesda campus) kindly shared with me this list of great events that will surely liven up your summer with healthy activities where you can meet new friends and enjoy fun games. The R&W Fitness Program is excited to present two weekly activities: 1) Free weekly yoga classes on main campus in June. Classes will be held in the afternoon at various campus locations. 2) Pick-Up Volleyball outside Building 31 on Mondays in June and July from 5 – 6:30pm outside the C wing. Bring your friends and we will see you there! Also, the R&W Fitness Program is currently forming teams for intramural sports leagues. If you are interested in signing up by yourself or with a team, leagues will begin in July. Another exciting event organized by R&W was on July 17. That's the date of Field Day, which consists of a variety of individual and team events including team tug

of war, volleyball, an obstacle course, and more. Location: TBD. For more information, please contact Sunithi at sunithi.hindagolla@nih.gov.

Let's not forget that the Fellows Committee (FelCom) will have happy hour as usual every month at Blackfinn in Bethesda. Other events coming up are: bowling at Navy, bike tour, walk around Arlington Cemetery, walk around the monuments, and outdoor movie night in Bethesda. More details to follow. FelCom will send out info to the list serve Fellow-L and post it to their Facebook page (Felcom Social Fellows). All fellows interested in social events are advised to subscribe to the list serve and like it on Facebook to keep updated. For more information, please contact Anna at anna.sundborger@nih.gov.

More options are available for the more intrepid adventurers. If you want to enjoy the ocean breeze, sailing is what you need. The NIH Sailing Association (<http://www.nihsail.org/>) is a sailing club for NIH and NOAA employees. The club has been in Montgomery County, Maryland since 1968 and owns five Flying Scot boats in Selby Bay (just south of Annapolis, Maryland) that members can charter. They offer training, racing, and social activities for the members. If you want to have a remarkable experience in nature with family or friends, you should check Harpers Ferry, West Virginia (www.riverriders.com). The location offers many outdoor activities such as white water rafting, tubing, Zip Line Canopy tours, Aerial Adventure parks, kayaking, canoeing, stand-up paddle boards, mountain biking, and fishing adventures on the beautiful Shenandoah and Potomac rivers. River Riders is only one hour from the Washington, DC and Baltimore Metro regions!

As you can see various activities can make the hot season an exciting time. So, are you ready for the summer? I am looking forward to it!

Upcoming Event

Immigration 101

A Mini-Symposium on Immigration and Visa Issues for Visiting Fellows at the NIH.

September 13th, 2013, 9am-12pm, Main auditorium, Building 45, NIH-Bethesda campus. This event is an opportunity for fellows to meet individually with staff from the NIH Division of International Services to discuss key topics such as the process of transition from J-1 to H-1 visa, permanent residency options, and other areas of immigration that are of interest to the visiting fellows. Please contact Ravi Yedidi (yedidirs@mail.nih.gov) if you have any questions or suggestions.

New Event

VFC-Brown Bag Series

Suggestions Requested

Often times, it is difficult for postdoctoral fellows at the NIH to navigate through different topics of interest such as immigration, funding, etc... The VFC-Brown Bag series was created to address such fundamental issues critical for visiting fellows whether at the NIH or during their career transition to the next level after the completion of their training at the NIH. The VFC-Brown bag series focuses on practical approaches to address these issues that are of utmost importance and relevance to the visiting fellows and that could be addressed irrespective of the country of origin.

The VFC-Brown Bag series was started on April 26th, 2013 with the first session focused on immigration and visa issues. All series are informal so that the attendees may ask to have their uncertainties clarified by the experts. Some of the Brown Bag sessions may also serve as networking opportunities for fellows looking for jobs or a career transition. If you are a visiting fellow at the NIH and have an issue that you

would like us to address in a Brown Bag session to benefit many NIH visiting fellows, please contact Ravi Yedidi (yedidirs@mail.nih.gov). All suggestions are welcome. Stay tune for the next series.

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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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