NIH VFC Newsletter
2015 Winter Edition

Contributing to global science development by building careers

Brown Bag Seminar Series
The NIH Library

By Daniel Schu, PhD

The NIH Visiting Fellows Committee (NIH-VFC) is a subcommittee of the NIH Fellows Committee (NIH-FelCom). It organizes a broad-spectrum informational seminar series called the VFC-Brown Bag Seminar Series for NIH fellows. The most recent installment of this seminar series was held on November 5, 2014, entitled "The NIH Library." The seminar provided a general overview of NIH Library (NIHL) services available to NIH employees, specifically services that may be useful to visiting fellows. The presentation was given by Diane Cooper (diane.cooper@nih.gov) and Brigit Sullivan (sheab@mail.nih.gov), both Biomedical Librarians at the NIHL.

Ms. Cooper began the seminar by mentioning that the overall mission of the NIHL is to function as a biomedical research library that offers collections and services to support institutes, programs, and research within the NIH. The first topic addressed was how to access NIH resources remotely. For this, Ms. Cooper directed us to the NIHL website (http://nihlibrary.nih.gov), where we were instructed to click on the remote access link. Following this, we would be able to link our account to the library via our NIH credentials. This would then allow full access to all services offered by the NIHL.

Next, Ms. Cooper reviewed navigating the NIHL homepage. With our account now linked, we were directed back to the NIHL Homepage to the Quick Links section. This section offers links to regularly used services on the website, including PubMed @ NIH. By utilizing this link, NIH employees may take full advantage of all the journals subscribed by NIH. Ms. Cooper noted that if a journal or article of interest is not present in the current catalog, a request for a specific journal can be placed online and the article of interest can be delivered to you within one to two days via email. Besides PubMed, several other search engines were also discussed including Web of Science, Scopus, and Embase. One feature that sets these search engines apart from PubMed is the ability to look up conference proceeding abstracts. Thus, a user can comb through unpublished data that may be relevant to his/her field of research. Embase is the European equivalent to PubMed.

At this point, Ms. Sullivan took over and reviewed how to create a library of citations. She introduced the program Endnote, a tool often used by researchers for publishing and managing bibliographies, citations, and references. Following a quick overview of the software, Ms. Sullivan demonstrated how to export citations to a bibliographic management program. She also demonstrated the use of the web version of EndNote, which allows for the storage of citations in an online EndNote library for later transfer to EndNote on a desktop.

The session concluded with an overview of other special services like systematic review, editing services, specialized classes, and the library's translation services. Systematic reviews take a topic of interest, and initially compile all the literature that has been written on it. Criteria are then developed, which allows for the identification of the most relevant literature for the review. This process is often utilized in writing manuscripts or reviews for publication.

Other very useful tools offered both in the library and online are editing services. These services consist of help with grammar, logic flow, and transitions. Other editing services include review of many forms of writing, helping to identify an appropriate journal to submit your study of interest, and helping to format a manuscript to meet the requirements for submission to a specific journal.

The NIHL currently offers classes covering topics like bioinformatics, data management, bibliometrics, and use of new technology. The data management class teaches how to store data that other people can access and use. The class is offered via webinars or in-person training, and covers cataloging and filing data. The course on bibliometrics reviews analyzing the academic literature to determine what research is being done in a given field and gaps that may exist in that area. Finally, there are various tutorials offered on the use of new technology. Current tutorials include the use of two new 3D printers at the library, geospacial technology, and training on mobile devices.

Finally, Ms. Cooper reviewed the library's translation services. The services are free for translation from various languages. Any languages not provided in-house are contracted out, at a cost. Common translated items include certifications, degrees and journal articles.

Tutorials for the services mentioned in this article are free. Requests for these services and others can be made at: http://nihlibrary.nih.gov/resourcetraining/Pages/RequestTutorial.aspx

Information on editing services can be found at: http://nihlibrary.campusguides.com/c.php?g=383330&p=244514

A training schedule for specialty classes being offered over the next few months can be found at: http://nihlibrary.nih.gov/AboutUs/Announcements/Pages/CurrentTraining.aspx.

For further information on the VFC-Brown Bag Seminar Series and the upcoming sessions, please visit us at www.training.nih.gov/vfc_brown_bag_series.

The content of this article has been approved by Ms. Cooper and Ms. Sullivan.

Where are they now?
From the NIH to the NBRC
An Interview with Dr. Banerjee

By Swagata Roychowdhury, PhD

After completing his postdoctoral training at the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Dr. Arpan Banerjee made a successful transition back to his roots in India. He is currently an Associate Professor/Scientist at the National Brain Research Centre (NBRC) and I recently had the opportunity to communicate with him to learn about his research interests and position as the head of the Cognitive Brain Lab.

Can you please provide a brief background on your research at the NIH?

My background is primarily in computer neuroscience and neuroimaging. I developed a quantitative technique to characterize the key events in processing of task-related information in the brain at millisecond temporal resolution. We also discovered the detailed roles of brain areas responsible for auditory processing of complex sounds in a collaborative project.

How was your postdoctoral experience at NIH?

In one word, 'fantastic.' I came to the NIH after a short two-year postdoctoral position at New York University (NYU). It was a drastic change in environment. In a university set up in the US, one is somewhat isolated from the broader community of scientists beyond immediate lab members. In particular, this is more so for visiting foreign post-doctoral fellows. The only chances of networking are through scientific conferences or meetings. At the NIH, a lot of emphasis is placed on the career development of the postdoctoral fellow. Many activities are related to networking, skill development and non-research science careers. This atmosphere provides the space for intellectual

freedom and emboldens the decision-making process.

What is your current role at the research center?

I am an Associate Professor/Scientist IV at the National Brain Research Centre, India. This is a tenure track position, with the possibility of tenure based on performance, similar to what is practiced at US universities. I am free to pursue any research direction of my choice. I am also part of the Centre for Excellence in Magnetoencephalography and Epilepsy that we recently set up in collaboration with the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi.

What are some of your research interests and responsibilities as an Associate Professor?

My research interests involve developing tools to identify functional network involvement in cognitive tasks from EEG/MEG & fMRI data. Our laboratory is interested in how the brain integrates information from various senses (e.g. visual, auditory, touch) to give rise to combined percepts. We are studying speech perception as a model system for this phenomenon where behavioral parameter changes give rise to changes in perception of speech sounds. We are also engaged in developing tools for isolation of epileptic seizure networks via non-invasive methods that will guide neurosurgeons in AIIMS towards surgical resection epileptic foci. My primary responsibilities here are setting up a multimodal functional neuroimaging lab and training neuroscientists coming through the MSc-PhD program.

What led you to transition to India? How was this transition?

This is a question that has been asked of me from every possible quarter including my friends, relatives, neighbors, and colleagues. It was an informed decision that my wife and I made because we always believed India was our place. Later, when we socialized with our friends who had children and finally had a child of our own we wanted to return to the same cultural environment in which we grew up ourselves. A selfish motive may be to live our lives again through them. The physical transition was relatively smooth but the mental one is still ongoing. There are several layers to it. On one hand, we are happy that we can celebrate cultural events with the friends and family that we grew up with. But, on the other hand, we miss our friends in the US, in particular those who became more of a big family.

How important was your training at the NIH when it came to working in India?

When working in the public sector in India, the biggest change is the work culture. Things can move very slowly. However, the training acquired at NIH came very handy here!

More information on the research conducted by Dr. Banerjee Cognitive Brain Lab can be found at http://cognitivebrainlab.weebly.com/.

The content of this article has been approved by D. Banerjee.

Fellow Life

Finding the Best Place to Live

The Lessons Learned by One Fellow

By Ashley Parker, PhD

Washington, D.C. (DC) and the surrounding area are ranked among the most expensive cities to live in America. The journey of finding a place to live in the DC, Maryland, or Virginia area poses challenges for many visiting fellows at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Some of the most important factors to consider are cost, location, safety, and proximity to the metro and the NIH. The task can be demanding and fellows can take different avenues to make these decisions.

Some visiting fellows who relocate from other cities in the US have less difficulty with finding

apartment homes. One example is a visiting fellow who was originally from South Korea, then moved here from North Carolina. She began her search by contacting the Office of Scientific Affairs, which she found using the NIH Korean Scientist Association website (www.nihksa.org). The society introduced her to a member of the group, who shared her apartment for three weeks during the new fellow's search for a one-bedroom apartment in Rockville. Most of the fellow's quest was influenced by recommendations from her temporary roommate and use of Google Maps to seek complexes near the Twinbrook metro station. The fellow indicated that the most important apartment features were the cost of monthly rent and closeness to a metro station since she planned to use the transit system as her sole use of transportation. Additionally, it was appealing to live in an apartment that offered specials for NIH employees, waived application fees, or offered discounted rental specials (e.g., Congressional Plaza and Halpine View apartments).

Another visiting fellow moved to the area from the state of Georgia, and consulted with a friend who was already a fellow at the NIH as they planned to be roommates prior to her arrival. The NIH Taiwanese Association has a listserv that provides information such as available housing for rent and openings for roommates (https://sites.google.com/site/taiwannih/). They were able to find a house for rent in Bethesda via a posting sent through the Taiwanese-Scientist email listing. However, living in a private home has posed some difficulties when household repairs are needed. Maintenance issues are subject to the landlord's availability and some took a week or longer to repair. Therefore, renting an apartment versus a private home can be advantageous due to the immediate or 24 hour repair response.

A visiting fellow from India, who arrived at the NIH a month ago, found temporary housing reservations (i.e., a one-month reservation) with help from the Foundation for Advanced Education in the Sciences (FAES) prior to her arrival (faes.student.housing@gmail.com). However, she needed a temporary place to live one week before moving to the FAES home. During her first two nights, she stayed at a local hotel in Bethesda. She then used the website suleka.com to search for housing, but was unable to find an apartment that was close enough to the NIH. A colleague suggested the website airbnb.com, which provides temporary housing at nightly rates. On this website, she found that most rooms in Bethesda that were close to the NIH ranged from $60-100 per night, and she used this type of housing for the first week. Once she moved into the FAES home she enjoyed her friendly roommates, reasonable price, and being in walking distance to work. While living in the FAES home, she used samslist.com to seek long-term housing accommodations and decided to rent a room in the Bethesda/Kensington area for $800-900 per month (https://nih.samslist.us/New_Short_Term_Rentals) . This website was helpful in finding a spacious room with a private entrance close to the Grosvenor metro station.

Moving to a new city and adjusting to a new research position can be difficult. Most fellows who successfully found comfortable housing consulted with friends and colleagues at the NIH prior to arriving. However, even if prior NIH contacts are not an option, it is possible to find a great place to live with some research using other available resources, such as: joining a listserv provided by the scientific associations on campus, utilizing temporary housing sponsored by FAES, and searching websites like samslist.com for housing information. The best places to live are where one feels most comfortable and can stay within a manageable budget. If you are considering moving or have friends who will soon join the NIH as a visiting fellow, these are simple tips to consider. Additional resources are listed below.

The Office of Intramural Training and Education (OITE), NIH Moving Guide: https://www.training.nih.gov/assets/Moving_Guide.pdf

The Recreation and Welfare Association(R&W): www.recgov.org/housing/housing.html.

Association of Indians at NIH: nihindia.com.

The NIH Chinese Students and Scholars Association: nihcssa.org.

The Cloisters: NIH Building 60.

Craigslist: http://washingtondc.craigslist.org/.

NIH Events

When Natural Disasters Cause Nuclear Disasters

The Aftermath of the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant Explosion

By Heba Diab, PhD

On March 11, 2011 a magnitude 9.1 earthquake, nucleating 230 miles outside of Tokyo, catalyzed the formation of a tsunami with 30-foot waves. With nearly 16,000 deaths, over 6,000 injured, and 2,600 reported missing individuals, this natural disaster resulted in a massive medical and humanitarian emergency. To further complicate matters, damage to nuclear reactors posed additional threats and a danger of radioactive toxicity. On October 23 and 24, 2014, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science hosted a symposium highlighting the frontiers of biomedical science from the NIH and Japan. An entire session was dedicated to the discussion of the responses to, and outcomes of, the Great Tohoku earthquake and Fukushima nuclear plant disaster.

Tohuku University was actively involved in responding to and researching the effects of the tsunami and subsequent events. As a result of previous earthquakes, researchers knew that one of the major consequences of natural disasters is psychological trauma. Dr. Shinichi Kuriyama's group wanted to understand the traumatic outcomes and treatment plans for individuals who experienced the 2011 disaster. Using local and national government studies, and questionnaires distributed with the help of the Tohoku Medical Megabank Organization, they were able to collect data from thousands of people. People in the coastal area showed the greatest levels of anxiety, which was understandable considering their proximity to the tsunami. A particularly interesting finding was the initial drop in suicide rates in both males and females, but a rise nearly 18 months later. This delayed response was baffling, but not unique to Japan. Previous research in people affected by Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana revealed a similar trend. While surprising, the initial drop in suicide rates could be attributed to the intense fortification of mental healthcare immediately after a traumatic event. Overall, the findings from Louisiana and Japan underscored the importance of immediate and sustained mental health relief in response to natural disasters.

While the tsunami resulted in the tragic loss of thousands of lives, it also created an exceptionally dangerous destabilization of infrastructure. This was particularly evident with the explosion of two units at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. Radioactive measurements revealed that after the explosion, the radiation plumes reached Tokyo and continued to contaminate the water for up to three weeks. Utilizing information from research after Chernobyl, which showed and increased frequency of thyroid cancer four years after the explosion, Dr. Yoshio Hosoi's group worked to understand the medical implications of exposure to contaminated water and food. His group specifically focused on the incidence of thyroid nodules and cancer. As thyroid cancer is a slowly developing disease, prolonged observation is required. Researchers initiated a screening protocol analyzing nodule and cyst growth and thyroid cancer formation over a three-year period. They found an increase in the size of thyroid nodules in individuals tested between 2011 and 2014. Overall, their findings on the increased rate of thyroid nodules detected by the use of high-precision tests raise a question of a possible increase in cancer risk, but this needs to be clarified.

Much can be learned from studying responses and medical outcomes of previous disasters. Dr. Kiyohiko Mabuchi discussed what was learned from Chernobyl and the implications for Fukushima. It is now well understood that there are several exposure pathways of radiation from

the environment to humans. Radiation-related risks can be modified based on external (e.g., penetrating from clouds or directly from radioactive deposits in the ground) and internal pathways (e.g., inhalation or ingestion through food and/or drink). The knowledge that radioactive particles were released into the air for ten days after Chernobyl led to a prompt and effective evacuation of residents near the power plants after the explosions in Fukushima. This was one of the major factors that prevented the nuclear explosions in Fukushima from becoming as devastating as Chernobyl. Secondly, effective countermeasures like testing food and water supplies for radioactive particles, helped limit internal radiation exposure. Thirdly, researchers established standardized, periodic ultrasound thyroid screen (regardless of exposure levels) to ensure proper monitoring of the development of thyroid cancer, but it is unclear whether the apparent increase in the rate and size of thyroid nodules suggests a potential future risk for cancer development.

Although the overall radioactive measurements emanating from the Fukushima nuclear power plant explosion were one-tenth of those compared to Chernobyl, people were quickly evacuated and food/water sources immediately tested. Furthermore, studying the responses to the Chernobyl disaster allowed Japanese researchers to modulate their countermeasures and establish effective methods to detect and monitor cancer development. Thus, even though natural disasters result in widespread tragedy, researching them closely allows people to learn effective ways to respond to future events.

The content of this article has been approved by Dr. Mabuchi, chair and speaker for this plenary session.

NIH Resources

Attending Seminars at the National Institutes of Health

By Lauren Lepone, PhD

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is one of the world's most prestigious medical research institutes. In addition to the excellent scientific training offered by the NIH, fellows have many opportunities to enhance their professional development. One of the best ways to gain a well-rounded training is to attend some of the many seminars and workshops held at the NIH.

Every day the NIH hosts speakers from around the world who are considered experts in their respective fields. Seminar topics range from scientific research to career advancement. Hearing scientific talks on cutting-edge research not only exposes fellows to recent scientific advancements, but can also provide insight into novel areas of research, opening possibilities for future projects and positions. Furthermore, networking sessions with speakers following their talks can provide great opportunities for collaborations. Career development workshops and seminars provide an excellent platform for fellows to learn about both traditional research careers and non-research career paths. These events provide information on career opportunities that may have been previously unknown to fellows, and are especially helpful for those interested in pursuing careers away from the bench. Importantly, seminars can also offer networking opportunities.

As these events are numerous, the first hurdle is learning where and when the events are being held. Although the amount of emails received on a daily basis can sometimes be overwhelming, a great resource to learn about seminars is through email. The NIH has a LISTSERV service (https://list.nih.gov/) where fellows can subscribe to specific email lists. On the homepage fellows can search for events relevant to specific areas of interest. A few examples include an email list

through the Office of Intramural Training and Education (OITE), one for Italian scientists at NIH, and a global health interest group email list. These tailored emails provide information on events hosted by the different groups. Another email resource is the Postdoc/Fellow Newsletter that Lori Conlan, Ph.D. sends through the OITE postdoctoral fellow list approximately once a month. This newsletter summarizes past and upcoming events, and provides a helpful overview of multiple events in a single email.

Aside from emails, other resources to learn about seminars and workshops are through calendars of events. These calendars are posted on the NIH and OITE websites (https://calendar.nih.gov/ and https://www.training.nih.gov/events/, respectively), and also have search options to find specific topics. The Visiting Fellows Committee (VFC) has a series called Science Voices from Home (https://www.training.nih.gov/vfc_science_voices_from_home), which hosts seminars by international scientists to allow NIH visiting fellows to maintain ties with the international science community. These seminars can help fellows make connections through networking for future positions abroad. The VFC also hosts a Brown Bag Series (https://www.training.nih.gov/vfc_brown_ bag series). These workshops provide important information for visiting fellows on topics like immigration, funding, and other resources like the NIH library. Another resource for fellows is the NIH Intramural Science group on LinkedIn (https://www.linkedin.com/). This group posts updates on events such as Grand Rounds seminars.

The NIH offers numerous opportunities for fellows to gain extensive scientific knowledge and develop professional skills during their training. It is in the best interest of fellows to take advantage of all the resources available at the NIH, especially the seminars and workshops. These valuable resources will ultimately help fellows make a smooth transition from their training to their chosen career paths.

Career Development

Practicing Public Speaking with a Toastmasters Club

By Ping Chen, MD, PhD

As a scientist, excellent communication skills are necessary to advocate for one's research. Therefore, as a non-English speaking scientist in an English speaking country, the ability to concisely convey thoughts and concepts during a presentation is a skill that must be learned. So how do people learn to do it well? Most people say there is only one-way: practice, practice, and more practice! Then the questions of how and where can one practice? Actually, there is a perfect place that will allow one to polish and improve those public speaking skills—a Toastmasters club!

Toastmasters clubs are located all over the world. People who like public speaking and desire to develop their leadership skills like to join these types of clubs to practice and share their experience with others. In the club, people come from different places and backgrounds, are different ages, and may even speak different native languages. However, in the club, people speak one language—English. Therefore, this club serves as a great opportunity to make friends who share the same goal of becoming more dynamic public speakers.

I have attended the Toastmasters club meeting three times now. Although this still makes me a relatively new member, I have to admit that it has been a very impressive experience for me so far. The impression I took away from my very first meeting was that people were really trying their best to show that they work hard to master the art of public speaking. It was also a friendly environment to make people feel comfortable when they stood to speak.

When I attended the second time as a guest to the club, the moderator asked me to give a 5-minute quick talk without any preparation, following

several presentations from other club members. I believe I was inspired by other people's presentations so I felt I wanted to stand and talk. I was brave at that time to stand in front of everyone and start to talk about "Time is Flying." I just said what I really wanted to say from my heart, and forgot I was talking to people who I did not know. It felt like I was talking to old friends. I noticed a small light facing me on the table had turned yellow, which meant I needed to wrap up my talk quickly. I remembered that people clapped for my talk, and then a club member commented on my presentation. Their critique included such things as how many times I said 'you know,' and other unnecessary words. He helped me realize I was using these filler words, and reminded me that I should try to avoid saying them next time. Finally, he gave a very positive summary for my talk. I do not remember my talk in detail, but I had a very happy experience there.

It has now been two years since I attended my first Toastmasters meeting. In that time I have given several oral presentations on my research to both colleagues at NIH and to more general audiences at national conferences. After these presentations, I have received much positive feedback, which has made me a more confident public speaker.

Aside from this newfound confidence, I have also been touched by a personal element from the people in the Toastmasters club when they talked about their own life stories or experiences. Whether those stories were sad or encouraging, I felt what they felt. Although I still have a long way to go to be a perfect public speaker, I am enjoying the process of improving. The hope of myself and the others who participate in the Toastmasters club is that we will continue to share and grow together as both public speakers and friends.

NIH Events

Careers in Scientific Societies

By Djamila Harouaka, PhD

What is a professional scientific society? What role do these societies play in the lives of scientists like you? A professional society is a collection of like-minded individuals who come together to promote a particular academic discipline. These types of societies often sponsor annual meetings and publish one or more discipline-specific journals. Such organizations usually offer trainees memberships at a nominal fee and provide information on career development, employment openings, and may offer fellowships to members.

On September 23, 2014, the Career Development subcommittee of the NIH Fellows Committee (Felcom) hosted a panel discussion entitled "Careers in Scientific Societies" featuring six members of different organizations. The panelists spoke of their role within their respective societies, and discussed how they made the transition from postdoctoral fellow to their current career. The first speaker, Christopher Pickett, Ph.D., is a policy analyst at the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB), which has about 12,000 members. Dr. Pickett transitioned from postdoc to science policy analyst through a society-sponsored policy fellowship before he was hired on full-time. He immersed himself in current science affairs by reading up on hot topics and keeping abreast of the latest news across disciplines. He advised individuals interested in pursuing a policy career to take every opportunity to improve their writing skills and to actively engage with people involved in policy work, to network, and ask questions. A typical day involves researching information to be aware of the latest issues, attending meetings with individuals involved in making policy decisions, writing position statements, press releases, and

efficiently managing many projects simultaneously.

The second speaker was Sherri-Gae Scott, Ph.D., the Grants Proposal Manager from the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), which serves over 120,000 biomedical researchers worldwide and 27 scientific societies. She assists organizers of the Science Research Conferences in obtaining funding through federal and non-federal sources. Her position involves fundraising, reviewing contracts, accounting, marketing, and recruitment. To transition to the financial side of science, Dr. Scott recommended proactively writing grants and voluntarily taking on greater responsibilities in terms of laboratory management to better understand the process. She suggested coursework and certifications could be useful in building a strong resume. Finally, she emphasized the need to develop soft skills like emotional intelligence and people skills, in addition to essential scientific skills such as critical thinking and organization.

The next speaker, Katherine Lontok, Ph.D., is the Educational Programs Manager at the American Society of Human Genetics. The organization has 18 staff members, which means that they all have to wear different hats and fulfill multiple roles. Lontok primarily organizes educational programs and works with students of all levels. She organizes and maintains genetics educational materials online and serves as the staff liaison to the Training and Development Committee. This is a standing committee comprised of trainees who focus on programming and initiatives for early career members. A typical day involves responding to public inquiries and providing input and contributing to other core society functions. She found that being detail-oriented, a good team player, thinking strategically, and being mindful of one's audience are skills that serve her well in her current position. She also emphasized the importance of maintaining a professional demeanor at all times.

The next two speakers operate in the realm of science outreach. Ulyana Desiderio, Ph.D. is the Director of Scientific Affairs at the American Society of Hematology. Emily Dilger, Ph.D. is the Public Outreach Manager at the Society for Neuroscience. Desiderio spoke of the importance of networking, and informational interviews, which involve contacting people in positions you are interested in and learning more about what their job entails. Dilger spoke of her role as a project manager for educational programs in different venues and said that the biggest challenge in transitioning careers for her included finding the balance between being a mentor and boss to people she supervises.

The final speaker, Ranjini Prithviraj, is a Managing Editor at the American Chemical Society. While there is no typical day, her main goal is to ensure that the journals she manages are each published every month, on schedule, with the appropriate levels of quality. In addition to attending conferences to stay up-to-date with the latest research findings, and inviting researchers to publish articles in her three journals, she is also responsible for picking journal covers, writing front matter, and recording podcasts. She said her volunteer work writing and serving as an organizer for Felcom helped her develop valuable skills, which aided in landing her current job.

The skills of a scientist can be applied in many venues. Scientific societies exist to help us hone our research skills and take advantage of existing opportunities to establish our own science careers. Links to the scientific societies described in the article are listed below:

American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (http://www.asbmb.org/)

Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (http://www.faseb.org/)

American Society of Human Genetics (http://www.ashg.org/)

American Society of Hematology (http://www.hematology.org/)

Society for Neuroscience (http://www.sfn.org/)

American Chemical Society (http://www.acs.org/)

The content of this article was approved by Drs. Pickett, Scott, Lontok, Desiderio, and Prithviraj.

Culture Corner
Combatting Winter Boredom and Blues

By Heba Diab, PhD

As the crisp fall air gives way to a full on chill and winter forcibly announces its presence, most of us seek refuge in our sweaters and space heaters. The days get colder and the nights longer, making it easy to lose oneself in the chilly darkness. But, lest the indoor environment becomes too stifling, know that this area has much to offer throughout the winter months.

One of reasons people are attracted to the Washington D.C. (DC) area is the incredible amount of American history. The holidays are filled with history and delight at George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate in Alexandria, Virginia. With hot cider, cookies, and a blazing fire, one can take an interactive, candlelight tour through time to see how the Washingtons spent their holidays. For the lover of all things chocolate, the Historic Division of Mars is sponsoring this year's Historic Alexandria Candlelight Tours. Visit homes and museums in Alexandria that were built over 200 years ago, all while sampling a delicacy shared all over the world, chocolate.

If there is one quintessential activity representing winter, it is arguably ice skating. Archeological studies suggest that ice skates were initially developed over 5,000 years ago in Finland to ease hunting in the harsh winter conditions (1). However, rather than strapping flattened animal bone to the bottom of your feet, try two steel blades. In- and outdoor skating rinks can be found throughout the DC-Maryland-Virginia (DMV) area, with one of the most picturesque being the National Gallery of Art Sculpture Ice Rink. Surrounded by museums, trees, and art pieces, one can try his/her skating skills at this outdoor rink. A newer and larger venue is the Washington Harbour Ice Rink. Watch as the plaza fountain is transformed into a rink larger than that of New York's Rockefeller Center. Once one tires from the chill of the air or the burn of out-of-shape legs, one can seek refuge in numerous shops and restaurants. However, if going down to DC is too much of a trek, one can always try the Rockville or Silver Spring Ice Skating Rinks.

While many winter activities cost money to participate, enjoying the twinkling lights that signify the holiday season is free. 1913 marked the beginning of a community Christmas celebration meant to provide holiday gathering and festivity to all of Washington (2). 100 years later, one of the most popular and impressive displays is the National Christmas Tree found near the White House. But don't stop there, walk around the area and observe the 56 smaller trees representing all 50 states, 5 territories, and DC. Each year, artists and volunteers create ornaments symbolizing the history and heritage of their states/provinces. Also, for animal fans, the National Zoo is decorated for Zoolights with thousands of lights arranged as sculptures of various animals.

One does not have to spend all of one's time outside, though. Each year the US Botanic Garden creates unique displays all made from plant parts. This year's theme is the seven seas, an experience filled with mermaids and sea creatures. After the nautical voyage, one can head into the Model Train Entrance to view an incredibly beautiful and intricate train exhibit.

Those who are more adventurous can rev up their adrenaline levels by strapping on a board or two and propelling themselves down the side of a mountain. Liberty and Whitetail Ski Resorts are about an hour from the DC area; both resorts have lessons and varying terrains for the beginning and advanced skier/boarder. If the idea of careening down a mountain in a standing formation does not sound appealing, there is always snow tubing. If one happens to fly off the inflatable tube, at least the ground is already close! Lastly, for those looking for a longer weekend away, one of the most popular destinations is Wisp Resort in McHenry, MD. Although it is three hours away, it offers a variety of activities including dog-

sledding, snowshoeing, and horse-drawn sleigh rides.

While winter can easily make a person prefer curling up under a blanket to the blast of chilly air, numerous events and activities are readily available in the DMV area. If nothing else, there are always impromptu snowball fights with friends. However, for a very unique experience, follow the Washington DC Snowball Fight Association on Facebook or Twitter to find out when and where thousands of people will converge in DC for a massive snowball fight. One will undoubtedly remember this awesome display for many years to come.

1. Formenti, F and Minetti AE. Biological Journal of the Linnean Society (2008). 93(1): 1-7.
2. http://www.nps.gov/whho/historyculture/history-of-the-national-christmas-trees.htm

Fellow Life

Being a Parent and Postdoctoral Fellow at the National Institutes of Health

By Delphine Quenet, PhD

Many postdoctoral fellows have reached an age when they either already have children, or plan to have children in the near future. However, academic science does not always provide the most supportive environment for scientists with families. A 2011 study published in *PLoS ONE* revealed that having fewer children than wished negatively affects the quality of life for scientists, and indirectly impacts career fulfillment of both female and male young scientists (*i.e.*, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows; 1). One impact is that these young scientists are more likely to consider a career outside of science (21% and 29%, respectively).

Parenthood is a challenge, and for Dr. Mary Ann Mason, professor and faculty co-director of the Berkeley School of Law Earl Warren Institute at the University of California, it can sometimes be a career killer for women (2). Finances, tight schedules, and tiredness are just of few of the challenges of being a parent in academia. In 2012, Dr. Christy Gelling, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Pittsburgh, interviewed 25 postdoctoral fellows and untenured faculty about these challenges and their coping strategies (3). Dr. Gelling observed heterogeneous situations for young scientists in the United States in terms of employment status, benefit policies, and resources for child care centers, to cite a few. Fortunately, there are means to alleviate some of these challenges.

Research trainees at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are fortunate. Policy states that a parent, either mother or father, may receive eight weeks of excused absence with pay for the birth or adoption of a child (see the 2012 edition of the NIH Postdoc Handbook, 4).

Next, parents need someone to watch their infant or child during working hours. The NIH Child Care Program (5) is open to trainees and consists of four NIH sponsored Child Care Centers, which care for children six weeks to five years of age (Infant and Toddler Child Care Center and East Child Care Center on the NIH Bethesda campus; Executive Child Development Center in Rockville; and NIEHS Child Care Center in North Carolina). However, there is a long waitlist for each center, especially for infants–over 1500 names total (6)! Therefore, it is essential for parents to explore other options. The NIH does provide help via the NIH Child Care Resource and Referral Service (contact: 1-800-777-1720 between the hours of 9:00AM - 5:00PM, Monday through Friday). At no cost, parents can be put in touch with a specialist who will listen to their needs (*e.g.*, schedule, financial, geographical, etc.) and find the best child care center, nanny, or pre-school.

Besides finding a daycare, parenting includes reorganizing of schedules, balancing lives, and budgeting, especially when parents are expecting a newborn. Furthermore, parents must adapt as their

children grow and their needs change. Where can parents find support? At the NIH, there is the Mom-Dad-Docs group, an affinity group of OITE, that is composed of trainees who meet once a month during lunchtime. Led by Ulrike Klenke (klenkee@mail.nih.gov), this one-hour meeting displays two formats: either a round table discussion or a webinar. During the round table discussions, trainees discuss issues associated with parenthood, such as: How to deal with the first week after delivery? How do you get a 3-year old to enjoy brushing his/her teeth? How to discipline your 15-month old child? I need extra time to finish ongoing tasks; how do I get extra time? The topic of this past December's meeting was "How to deal with the holiday stress?" The NIH Child Care Program also offers several services, including Lunch and Learn Parenting/Dependent Care seminars and personal coaching. The seminars are videocast and archived (7). More information is available on the NIH Child Care Program website (8).

Additionally, parents can also find support outside of the NIH. For instance, the PACE group, led by professional mental health educators, provides emotional and educational support to new mothers (9). Other websites list activities for children, and lectures on parenthood in Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia (*e.g.*, 10-12). Finally, parents should not forget their friends and family, who can give comfort and suggestions.

Parenthood is a challenge. But there are strategies to deal with the obstacles. It is important for parents to remember to have fun with their children, to find a good work/life balance so that they can be there for their child's important developmental steps, and to enjoy their double life as scientist-parents.

1. Ecklund & Lincoln, 2011, PLoS ONE 6(8): e22590

2. www.slate.com/articles/double_x/doublex/2013/06/female_academics_pay_a_heavy_baby_penalty.html

3. www.asbmb.org/asbmbtoday/asbmbtoday_article_print.aspx?id=17645

4. https://www.training.nih.gov/assets/Postdoc_Handbook_2012.pdf

5. http://go.usa.gov/GZ4

6. http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dats/childcare/Documents/Number%20of%20Children%20on%20Waitlist%20by%20Center%20and%20Age%20as%20of%20September%2030%202014.pdf

7. http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dats/childcare/Pages/parent_seminars.aspx#inf

8. http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dats/childcare/Pages/Family-Resources.aspx

9. www.pacemoms.org

10. http://www.washingtonparent.com

11. http://www.our-kids.com

12. http://www.internationalwomensgroup.org

Clinical Academic Careers

Challenges for International Medical Doctors

By Varun Sethi, MD, PhD

Are you passionate about searching for patterns and clues amongst painstakingly collected data? Are you excited by the mystery of solving a clinical puzzle and reaching a diagnosis? If you answered yes to either of these questions, chances are that you would be well-suited for a career in clinical academia. The word academia has a scholarly connotation implying a deep intellectual curiosity and the accumulation of knowledge. This contrasts with the more practical focus emphasized in clinical practice. A career managing the marriage of such two very different temperaments can be challenging, to say the least. This duality is captured well in a quote adapted from Hermann Hesse' *Narcissus and Goldmund*, "It is not our

purpose to become each other; it is to recognize each other, to learn to see and honor the other: each the other's opposite and complement." Becoming a clinical academic is a slow process that requires patience, perseverance, and the ability to adapt to change.

Many visiting fellows at the NIH have obtained both MD and PhD degrees, often across different countries. While academic skill sets and degrees can translate across borders, the eligibility to practice medicine requires clearing the local medical licensure examinations. With the ease of international travel, it is a very real possibility that one's career path may detour through multiple countries and continents. On the one hand is the advantage of working in an era that allows individuals the opportunity to travel and learn. Yet, for a clinical academic, this often requires that an individual re-qualify his/her credentials via the local medical licensing authority, and take a new set of examinations.

Examples of medical licensure exams necessitated by career moves include an Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) certification in the US and the Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board (PLAB) test in the UK. Efficient time management and financial planning are essential, and it is also critical to understand the limitations with respect to visa and immigration rules. For those who will return to their home countries, other challenges may lay in creating a novel clinical academic environment. In India for example, it is very easy to get compartmentalized as being *either* a clinician or an academic; medical college faculty positions are the rare exception.

Transitioning into non-clinical research and teaching positions is an option that is increasingly pursued by MD-PhDs, including careers in science writing, science policy and industry. NIH has a host of activities that allow one to test the waters and judge for his/herself if such a career transition is desired. A good step is to talk to people who have made such a transition by arranging informational interviews and getting involved with organizations like the NIH Science Policy Discussion Group. Completing a detail is another way to gain first-hand experience in a new discipline, and lets an individual learn if a that discipline fits with his/her personal and professional goals.

Although having multiple career options is generally a positive "problem" to have, it can be stressful to determine which option is "best." No matter the path following one's postdoctoral training, an efficient and informed plan will go a long way to ensuring success. For most fellows, this choice comes at a time in their lives when the responsibilities of balancing children and family and developing careers present additional challenges. Therefore, it is important to investigate, question, and rationalize the available options. "For those bold enough to lead us in this age of uncertainty, the challenges are immense" (Boyatis R and Mckee A, 2005).

From a global perspective, it is very important, that the clinical academic community revisit education policies to promote a smooth transition for professionals in the pursuit of academic clinical research. Collaborations across countries can go a long way to further the advancement of scientific research. The practice of medicine should be able to take advantage of similar international opportunities. In times of need, doctors across borders are allowed to travel on humanitarian grounds. The recruitment of academic staff to medical schools suggests that academic medicine instructors are in demand. In the UK for example, there are 171 vacancies at the professor, senior lecturer, and lecturer levels, as reported in a recent survey of medical clinical academic staffing (1). Global efforts to encourage, promote, and finance clinical academic careers across borders are needed. A greater emphasis on accommodating the needs of individuals with MD-PhDs would also help serve the demand for clinical academics in the US and abroad.

1. 'A survey of staffing levels of medical clinical academics in UK medical schools, as at 31 July 2013'; a report by Medical Schools Council; May 2014. http://www.medschools.ac.uk/AboutUs/Proj

ects/Documents/2014-Clinical-Academic-Survey-Medicine-July-2013-data.pdf

Announcements and Events

- The VFC Newsletter is always looking to add to its talented pool of NIH fellow writers and editors. If you are interested in science writing and editing careers and would like to gain valuable experience, develop transferable skills, and add to your writing portfolio, please submit a 150 word statement of intent to our managing editor, Amie D. Moody (amie.moody@nih.gov). Your statement should highlight your desire to serve in such a capacity, your ability to dedicate the necessary time to this activity, and how this opportunity would fit into your personal career goals. No previous writing or editing experience is necessary.

- NIH SACNAS Chapter monthly meeting: Taking ownership of your career-Developing Plan

Building 10, FAES room 1&2 on February 18, 2015 from 12-1 pm. For more information, please visit https://www.training.nih.gov/events/view/_2/1562/NIH_SACNAS_Society_for_the_Advancement_of_Chicanos/Hispanics__Native_Americans_in_Science_Chapter_Monthly_Meeting_Taking_Ownership_of_Your_Career_-_Developing_a_Plan.

- **On our Frederick campus**, Improving Spoken English

Building 549, conference room B on February 19, 2015 from 8:45 am – 4:00 pm. For more information, please visit https://www.training.nih.gov/events/view/_2/1492/FREDERICK_Improving_Spoken_English.

For a complete list of OITE events, please visit https://www.training.nih.gov/events/upcoming.

VFC Newsletter 2015 Winter Edition Staff

Dr. Amie D. Moody, *Managing Editor*
amie.moody@nih.gov

Dr. Ping Chen
ping.chen2@nih.gov

Dr. Heba Diab
heba.diab@nih.gov

Erika Ginsburg
ginsbure@mail.nih.gov

Dr. Djamila Harouaka

Dr. Christine Jao
jaocc@mail.nih.gov

Dr. Lauren Lepone
lauren.lepone@nih.gov

Dr. Masfique Mehedi
mehedim@mail.nih.gov

Dr. Delphine Quénet
quenetdc@mail.nih.gov

Dr. Kevin Ramkissoon
kevin.ramkissoon@nih.gov

Dr. Urvashi Ramphul

Dr. Swagata Roychowdhury
swagata.roychowdhury@nih.gov

Dr. Jaya Sarkar
jaya.sarkar@nih.gov

Dr. Vandana Sehkar

Dr. Varun Sethi
varun.sethi@nih.gov

Dr. Shawn Mullen, *Advisor*
mullensh@mail.nih.gov

Looking for Leadership Opportunities?

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

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

Become a voice regarding issues of importance to visiting fellows.

Help your career as you help your colleagues.

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

National Institutes of Health Visiting Fellows Committee

Dr. Stephanie Olivier-Van Stichelen, *VFC Co-Chair*
stephanie.olivier-vanstichelen@nih.gov

Dr. David Sanchez-Martin , *VFC Co-Chair*
sanchezmartind@mail.nih.gov

WE ARE ON THE WEB

https://www.training.nih.gov/felcom/visitingfellows2