



## From the Editor's Desk

The summer months have come and gone and hopefully everyone enjoyed their time spent both in and outside of the lab. The latest edition of the newsletter features a letter from the newly elected chair of the FYI Steering Committee, Dr. Jim Gould. We also have a review from the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Colloquium held in the early half of the year and an update of national post-doc issues discussed at a recent NPA conference. Another feature is an interview with Dr. Glen Merlino, one of the recipients of a 2008 NCI Outstanding Mentoring Awards. In addition, you don't want to miss the article interviewing two individuals who are actively involved with government policy.

Editors:  
Tim Chan, PhD  
Geraldine O'Connor, PhD  
Selinda Orr, PhD  
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IF YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS OR WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO FUTURE NEWSLETTERS PLEASE EMAIL US AT [nciccrfyi@mail.nih.gov](mailto:nciccrfyi@mail.nih.gov), or [chantim@mail.nih.gov](mailto:chantim@mail.nih.gov)

**Providing support for fellows at CCR**

CCR-FYI Association is supported by the CCR Office of the Director

# CCR-FYI News

## Letter from the FYI Chair

I would like to take this opportunity to re-introduce you to the CCR Fellows and Young Investigators (CCR-FYI) Steering Committee and its mission. Our officers for 2009-2010 are Jim Gould, Chair; Jill Ford, Frederick Vice-Chair; Brid Ryan, Bethesda Vice-Chair; and Raed Samara, Secretary. This committee was formed by fellows in order to provide support and advocacy for postdoctoral and clinical fellows as well as young investigators at the NCI in all aspects of their training and career development. We are supported by the CCR Office of Training and Education and its Director, Jonathan Wiest.

As a fellow at the NCI, you are already included in the CCR-FYI and it only takes coming to our meetings on the last Thursday of every month to become a member of the Steering Committee. We have outstanding fellows that are active in various ways within our four subcommittees. Our Retreat Subcommittee is chaired by Stephanie Watkins and is responsible for organizing our annual offsite colloquium for the NCI CCR fellows. Our Community Life Subcommittee includes six subgroups that provide support in the mission of promoting interaction among CCR fellows on an academic, social and cultural basis. We write, edit, and produce a quarterly Newsletter that is responsible for informing fellows of activities, campus developments and relevant issues. We maintain a website (<http://ccr.cancer.gov/careers/fellows/default.aspx>) that includes important information regarding our committee including member contacts, minutes and by-laws. We organize quarterly social events for the CCR fellow community at-large. We have representatives from our committee that attend and assist the CCR Office of Training and Education with new fellow orientations on both campuses to introduce the CCR-FYI and life at the NCI. We also have members appointed as liaisons to both the NIH Fellows Committee (FelCom) and the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA), of which the NCI is a sustaining member. Our By-Laws and Policy Subcommittee is chaired by Tom Paul and is responsible for maintaining and updating the rules and guidelines that comprise our charter and mission. Our Scientific Subcommittee is chaired by Stephanie Watkins and is responsible for both the Postdoctoral

Seminar Series in Bethesda (PASS) and Frederick along with presenting the results of the annual survey to the NCI Office of the Director, Intramural Advisory Board, and Principle Investigators. In essence, we act as a liaison between the CCR Office of the Director, the CCR Office of Training and Education, and the postdoctoral community while representing the interests of postdoctoral trainees to the NCI and the CCR.

I would like to inform you that there are abundant opportunities available to you not only as a trainee of the NCI/CCR but also as a member of the NIH community. It is my hope that you will seek out and use the CCR-FYI as resource and even consider joining the Steering Committee. Our committee is for the fellows, by the fellows and we are connected to and respected by the CCR administration. Please remember that your training at the NCI is not just meant to include benchwork but it is also meant to be an opportunity to build yourself into a well-rounded scientist capable of collaborating, networking, presenting, communicating, publishing, and transitioning into the next stage of your career. And we can help at each step of the way.

Thank you,



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## Articles

### Highlights from the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Fellows and Young Investigators Colloquium

The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Fellows and Young Investigators Colloquium was held in the Hershey Lodge, Hershey, Pennsylvania from March 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>. It was another successful Colloquium with 320 registered participants attending a diverse set of lectures and presentations. We were fortunate to have 4 outstanding keynote presentations. Dr. Carla Kim (Harvard Medical School) opened the keynote presentations with insights into lung carcinogenesis her laboratory has gained through a new lung cancer stem cell assay she has developed. Following dinner on the first day, Dr. Tak Wah Mak (University of Toronto) gave a mesmerizing keynote lecture on Cancer Metabolism that captivated the audience. Only time will tell if Dr. Mak fulfilled his goal to convince some fellows and young investigators where he believed cancer research should refocus. Opening the second day, Dr. Susan Gottesman (Laboratory of Molecular Biology, CCR, NCI) presented the bacterial perspective on cellular regulation by small RNAs. Finally, on the morning of the final day of presentations Dr. Crystal Mackall (Pediatric Oncology Branch, CCR, NCI) spoke about her experience with the “Bedside-to-Bench” approach to research in her efforts to understand T-Cell homeostasis in humans.

In addition to the invited keynote speakers, Dr. Aaron Schetter gave the

4<sup>th</sup> Outstanding Postdoctoral Lecture that focused on the history of micro-RNAs and cancer and his research efforts to study their potential as biomarkers and therapeutic targets in cancer. Also of note, Dr. Schetter had won a travel award at the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual FYI colloquium. In an effort to reflect the diverse aspects of the cancer research experience and spectrum, this year’s participants also had the opportunity to participate in a special session focusing on cancer survivorship. On the second evening of the conference we screened the documentary, ‘Dear Talulah’, a personal, moving and intimate portrait of how one woman

coped with her breast cancer diagnosis just months after giving birth to her daughter. Lori Benson, the subject of the film, and its creator, was on hand afterwards to participate in an honest discussion of how a cancer diagnosis affects your experiences as a woman, a daughter, a friend and a mother. We

were very grateful to her for sharing this time in her life with us.

The colloquium organizers also focused six professional development workshops on key issues that fellows and young investigators face in their time at the NCI. There were 3 workshops that aimed to assist newer investigators

at the NCI: (i) “Taking Control of Your Future: Getting the Most out of Your Postdoc” discussed strategies for young

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Top: Presentation of the Outstanding Postdoctoral Award 2009 by the CCR Director, Dr Robert Wilttrout (left), to Dr Aaron Schetter (right) from the Laboratory of Human Carcinogenesis. Bottom: Lori Benson presenting her documentary ‘Dear Talula: An Intimate Portrait of a Breast Cancer Survivor’.

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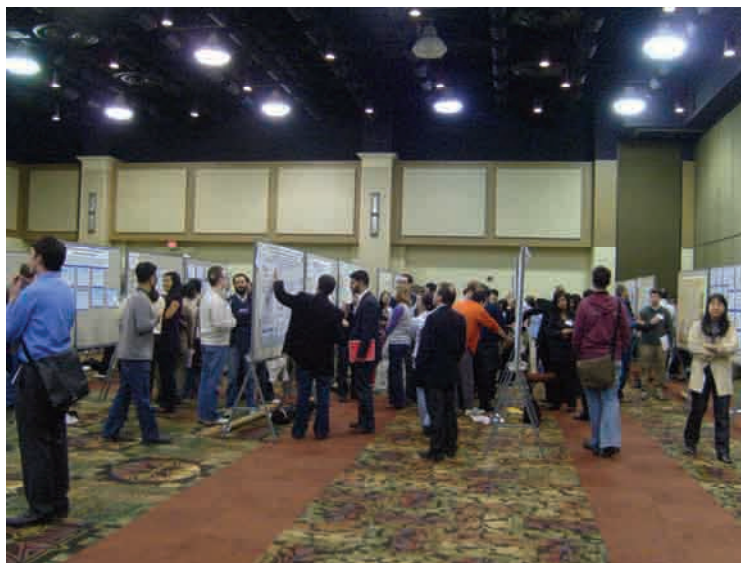
investigators so that they get the most out of their time at the NCI and are prepared for life after a post-doc; (ii) “Effective Publishing Strategies” gave tips to young investigators that ranged from journal selection to more effective writing techniques; (iii) “Core Facilities at the NCI” outlined the facilities that the NCI offers, and through interaction with Core scientists, detailed how these services can aid our research. Two workshops were aimed at more senior fellows; (i) “Moving to Industry” exposed fellows to the industrial research setting that many scientists choose as their future career path; and (ii) “Careers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” exposed fellows to additional career path options outside of academia and industry. Finally “Getting from the Bench to Bedside” was the workshop that both junior and senior fellows and young investigators could enjoy.

In addition to the career workshops focused to aid the more senior investigators with their future career path choices, there was a career fair and CV critique. The 5<sup>th</sup> annual Career Fair had a diverse set of companies representing many career opportunities including opportunities with the Henry M. Jackson Foundation, SRA International, Schafer Corporation, German Research Foundation – DFG, Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Inc., AAAS, Kelly Services, Inc., Lockheed Martin and National Cancer Institute’s Technology Transfer Center.

This year’s colloquium committee organized two CV seminars which were held prior to the colloquium, where Steve Gallison spoke regarding appropriate CV formatting and gave tips on marketing yourself to potential employers. With attendance to one of these seminars, individuals were able to meet one on one for a 20-minute CV critique with Steve Gallison at the Colloquium. These individual critique sessions were just one more addition to the 2009 Colloquium to aid fellows in preparing for their future.

The colloquium also highlighted the research endeavors of current CCR fellows and young investigators through a variety of oral and poster presentations. Graduate students, post docs and fellows presented their research in oral

presentations or poster presentations. There were 40 oral presentations and 130 poster presentations between two poster sessions covering 8 abstract categories. Travel awards were presented at the final meal of the colloquium. Congratulations to Drs. Luhua Zhang, Kimberly A. Shafer-Weaver, Tiffany A. Wallace, Patricia and S. Tsang for excellent oral presentations and to Drs. Adam Cheuk, Asako Nakamura, Maria Ana Duhagon Serrat, and Sam Hong for exceptional poster presentations. These eight individuals were awarded \$1000 travel awards to be utilized for attendance at scientific conferences. In addition, a raffle was held to win one of four iPod shuffles upon submission of both the colloquium and general scientific surveys. These surveys are currently being compiled and this data will help highlight future issues that both the colloquium organizing committee and CCR Steering Committee can address.



Active discussion at a poster presentation session during the Colloquium.

In addition to 4 keynote sessions highlighting the ground breaking science occurring at the forefront of cancer research, the colloquium again proved to be an excellent medium to meet new people, network and hear about our peers’ research. We would like to thank the CCR Office of the Director, under the guidance of Dr. Robert Wiltrott, for their continuing financial support in providing the fellows and young investigators

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Recipients of the 2009 Travel Awards for excellence in their scientific presentation at the Colloquium. Left to Right- Dr Tiffany Wallace, Luhua Zhang, Dr Kimberly Shafer-Weaver, Sam Hong, Dr Patricia Tsang, Dr Tai Chi Cheuk.

within CCR with this invaluable training opportunity. We also wish to sincerely thank Dr. Jonathan Wiest, the Associate Director of Training and Education and Director of the Center for Cancer Training, for his tireless efforts in working with us and guiding the planning of this retreat. We are also indebted to Jean Kazares, who worked closely with the organizing committee to make this year's colloquium extremely successful and enjoyable. We would also like to thank all

the individuals and members of the CCR Steering Committee who volunteered their hard work and time. Finally, the rest of our committee, Orla Casey, Matt Hall, Leslie Chinn and Krista Zanetti donated many dedicated hours of their time to make the colloquium such a success. We are very grateful to them.

Remember to look out for details regarding next year's Colloquium. Even if you attended this year, the program and focus of this retreat is continually evolving, with each year highlighting novel research at CCR, exploring new dimensions of postdoctoral life and building on the success and suggestions of previous years.

This is a colloquium run by CCR young investigators for

CCR young investigators. Your participation is essential for its continued success. And so we look forward to seeing everyone there in 2010.

Submitted by:

*Edward K. Wright Jr.*

*Brid M. Ryan*

*2009 Colloquium Committee Co-chairs*

### **To all CCR trainees**

**Did you know that the *CCR Office of Training & Education*:**

- **Assists trainees and mentors with mentoring issues.**
- **Assists in submitting applications for various funding mechanisms.**
- **Provides opportunities for expanding collaborative interactions.**
- **Assists trainees in the transition to different career paths.**
  - **Provides numerous courses**
  - **And much more!**

***CCR Office of Training & Education***

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**Director for Training and Education**

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## Spotlight on Mentoring at the CCR: an interview with Dr. Glen Merlino

As mentioned in our previous article “Spotlight on Mentoring at the CCR: an interview with Dr. Figg”, two mentors from the CCR, Dr. William Douglas Figg, PharmD and Dr. Glenn Merlino, PhD were named NCI Outstanding Mentors in November 2008. In this article, we will focus on the achievements of Dr. Glenn Merlino. According to Dr. Merlino, his nomination for this award was a wonderful surprise and he would like to sincerely and deeply thank his lab members for nominating him.

Dr. Merlino received his BA *summa cum laude* from Adelphi University, and his PhD from the Department of Cellular and Molecular Biology at the University of Michigan. He then moved to the NCI for a post-doctoral fellowship and has progressed through the ranks at the NCI to become Chief of the Laboratory of Cancer Biology and Genetics (LCBG). His lab currently consists of 7 individuals ranging from a post-baccalaureate to a staff scientist. He has previously trained approximately 12 post-doctoral fellows who are now scattered across the globe with promising careers in academia or industry with interests ranging from clinical to basic research. Some of his previous trainees have also pursued careers at the FDA and teaching, indicating that Dr. Merlino has encouraged his trainees to pursue their choice of careers.

When asked how he became an effective mentor, he modestly replied that, like anyone, he is not perfect and still makes mistakes. However, he firmly believes that working hard to realize when mistakes are made and then attempting to correct the errors and learning from these mistakes is important. He feels that more training for

junior faculty in learning how to become good mentors would be helpful and as such he is currently mentoring some tenure track investigators on how to manage people and various situations that may arise. He believes that mentoring is a partnership and that both the mentee and the mentor need to be invested in this partnership for

a good, productive working relationship. When asked about his mentors, he talked about the contributions provided by his thesis advisor, Dr. Lewis Klein-smith (University of Michigan), his previous post-doctoral supervisor, Dr. Ira Pastan (NCI) and from former LCRC lab chief, Dr. Anita Roberts. All three of these individuals have been an inspiration to Dr. Merlino and have taught him a great deal about mentoring and science. Dr. Merlino took over the lab of Dr. Roberts and he has strived to follow in her example in creating a sense of community in the lab and fostering great interaction with trainees. He also attributes much of his success to his former staff scientist, Dr. Chamelli Jhappan, who was instrumental to Dr. Merlino in helping him create better mentor-mentee relationships

by helping him identify and fix mistakes or gaps in these relationships.

Mentoring consists of guiding trainees both about scientific issues and career promotion. For most mentors, “the science takes care of itself” but some mentors have a tendency to forget to address the future of the trainees’ career. Dr. Merlino encourages his trainees to attend at least one conference per year and to give an oral presentation, if possible. Dr. Merlino is invited to many conferences to speak and when possible he will send his trainees instead of himself to



Glen Merlino, Chief of the Laboratory of Cancer Biology and Genetics, was named as one of 2008's NCI Outstanding Mentors.

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smaller meetings in order to further their visibility within the scientific community. His trainees also participate in many local talks such as journal clubs, department lab meetings, smaller lab meetings and small interest groups. He also encourages his trainees to write a proposal for the annual Directors Innovation Award. His lab has received 6 of these awards in the last 4 years. This has mainly been driven by the post-docs but he gives guidance when needed. This process encourages the trainees to think for themselves and to practice the art of grant writing. As the trainees in his lab progress, they may get the opportunity to mentor a summer student thereby learning how to deal with training and mentoring people. Dr Merlino believes that trainees who gain experience in these key areas –oral presentations, visibility within the community, grant writing and mentorship are in a better position to succeed as they progress forward. He also has a yearly review with his trainees to ensure they are on the right track towards achieving their future career goals. When we asked Dr. Merlino for words of advice for the next generation of future mentors, he replied with that mentoring is a partnership that must consist of investment from both parties in order to have a successful relationship. At this point I would like to thank Dr. Merlino for participating in this interview, and I hope that from reading this article you will feel inspired to work at improving present and future mentor-mentee relationships that you are involved in.

Submitted by:  
Selinda Orr, PhD,

## Highlights of the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) Meeting

The NPA was founded in 2003 and incorporated as a non-profit organization in 2005. It was founded by postdocs, for postdocs. Its mission is to “to advance the US research enterprise by maximizing the effectiveness of the research community and enhancing the quality of the post-doctoral experience for all participants.” Since its inception, the NPA has been a legitimate organization that has brought changes benefiting post-docs. A meeting is held each year organized by the NPA that brings together postdocs and administrators from different institutions to discuss

*Editor's Note:*

*Recipients of the 2009 Outstanding Mentors awards have been released as shown below: Congratulations!!*

The 2009 NCI Outstanding Mentor Award winners are:

- Donald P. Bottaro, Ph.D., Urologic Oncology Branch, CCR
- Dimiter S. Dimitrov, Ph.D., CCR Nanobiology Program, NCI-Frederick
- Chand Khanna, D.V.M., Ph.D., Pediatric Oncology Branch, CCR
- Len Neckers, Ph.D., Urologic Oncology Branch, CCR

The 2009 Mentors of Merit are:

- Natasha J. Caplen, Ph.D., Genetics Branch, CCR
- Genoveffa Franchini, M.D., Vaccine Branch, CCR
- Lee J. Helman, M.D., Scientific Director for Clinical Research, and Pediatric Branch, CCR
- Dennis M. Klinman, M.D., Ph.D., Laboratory of Experimental Immunology, NCI-Frederick
- Stuart F.J. LeGrice, Ph.D., HIV Drug Resistance Program, NCI-Frederick
- W. Marston Linehan, M.D., Urologic Oncology Branch, CCR
- Lawrence E. Samelson, M.D., Laboratory of Cellular and Molecular Biology, CCR
- Xin Wei Wang, Ph.D., Laboratory of Human Carcinogenesis, CCR

issues relating to postdocs. This year, the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual NPA meeting took place from March 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> at the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, TX.

**A synopsis of the meeting is shown below:**

The *Plenary Session* was given by Peter Fiske, PhD. Dr. Fiske has been involved in panel discussions and workshops on 21<sup>st</sup> century careers for scientists. He regularly writes articles for

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the AAAS Career Web site:

[www.sciencecareers.org](http://www.sciencecareers.org).

Some key points from his address:

- Postdocs need to get career development advice at the beginning of their career.
- Scientists make great entrepreneurs: They are self sufficient, motivated self-starters; possess deep technical understanding; and are used to living off a small salary.
- Dr. Fiske discussed the 80:10:10 rule: spend 80% of your time on key issues you are working on; 10% on your own professional development; and 10% telling people what a great job you are doing. This rule helps your professional development while at the same time allows you to network efficiently.
- Skills needed in this market (not an exhaustive list): leadership, persuasion, humor, tact, creativity, organization, and perspective.
- Career change is harder for postdocs because: lack of an established pathway; fear/anger of 'a degree for nothing'; ignorance/fear of life in the real world.
- But if you are considering a career change, follow the following steps:
  - Start by a self-assessment
  - Explore (keep options open, keep listening, develop skills)
  - Focus (build your network)
  - Job search/action plan
- Formal methods of self-assessment: Myers-Briggs, Strong-interest inventory, career beliefs inventory, skills and values card slots.
- Make the best of setbacks. Don't let them hold you back.
- Become an insider of the industry you are interested in through: internships, volunteer, part time work, moonlighting, consulting, and incorporate outside topics into your research.
- Start a career development journal

The *Keynote Address* was given by the Nobel Laureate Peter Doherty, PhD. Dr. Doherty shared the 1996 Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine with Swiss colleague Rolf Zinkernagel for their discovery of how the immune system recognizes virus-infected cells.

Some key points from his address:

- Having a successful postdoc:
  - Postdocs drive science: technology changes very rapidly and old PIs might not be very well connected to it; therefore, young scientists are needed
  - Know yourself, interests, and skills
  - Don't underestimate yourself
  - Develop collaborations and build teams; One man show is over
- Changing fields can be good for you. Minds that are trained in different fields are important, but you have to be known for something. Don't chop too much.
- Be generous and ethical, and recognize contributions of competitors and give credit to those who went before
- Scientists of the future come in different flavors:
  - Academia
  - Product development
  - IP protection
  - Clinical trials organization and management
  - Scientific managers
  - Running shared resources

**If you are interested in joining the NPA, please let me know. The NCI is an affiliate member, so you can join the NPA for free.** Your free membership gives you access to all the resources that the NPA offers. For more information about NPA, go to: [www.nationalpostdoc.org](http://www.nationalpostdoc.org). To fulfill its mission, the NPA needs the help and input of each one of us. There are four committees that you can join, each with specific aims and goals. The committees are: Advocacy, Meetings, Outreach, and Resource development. For more information, please visit the NPA's website.



Submitted by  
Raed Samara, PhD



## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Science Careers: Government Policy

If you are looking for a science career that doesn't involve working in the lab, you may want to consider government policymaking. What does a career in government policy look like? How do you transition from trouble-shooting your PCR reaction to crafting science policy for the State Department? I interviewed two scientists who work in the arena of government policy to provide some helpful insights for anyone looking to change their scientific focus from the lab to policy. They both gained their policy skills through the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Fellowship in Science and Technology Policy. Fellowships are a one year term, but can be extended. Dianna Edgil, PhD is a current AAAS Fellow working at the Department of State. Her main area of responsibility is to support the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Dianna's fellowship was extended, and she is now in her second and final year. Julie Schneider, PhD used her AAAS Fellowship experience to launch her career in government policy. She is currently an NCI Program Director on long-term assignment in Beijing, China. Her main focus is to set-up an NCI Office of China Cancer Programs. I first interviewed Dianna to find out what it is like to be an AAAS Fellow, then Julie to provide us with an outlook on a career in policy.

### DIANNA EDGIL, PhD

Dianna Edgil completed her PhD at UC, Berkeley. Her research focused on a mosquito-borne viral disease called Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever. In addition to her bench research, she acted as a scientific consultant to laboratories in Ecuador and Nicaragua, helping to set up dengue diagnostics for several national programs. After graduating, she relocated to Washington, DC and worked as a project manager for Georgetown's Lombardi Cancer Center. In 2006, she joined a non-governmental organization (NGO) called the International Vaccine Institute in Seoul, South



*"The most fun thing about the job is that I am constantly meeting new people from other agencies and every day is different" - Dianna Edgil*

Korea to work on the Pediatric Dengue Vaccine Initiative. She set up dengue diagnostics laboratories in several developing countries including Colombia, India, and Thailand. In 2008, she returned to Washington, DC to begin her AAAS Fellowship.

How difficult was the application process?

*The application process was pretty simple, basically a CV and personal statement. There was also an interview with a committee and finally interviews with offices for placement following acceptance into the program.*

Why did you pick this particular fellowship (Diplomacy at State)?

*I picked the diplomacy fellowship because my background and interests are in international health. I studied a mosquito-borne tropical disease for nearly 10 years academically and worked internationally with an NGO. The one thing that I felt I had no experience with was the U.S. government's activities in international health.*

What is a typical day like? How many hours do you work per week?

*I took a position with the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator, which is the office that oversees the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. In general my day involves a ton of meetings to discuss issues that influence policy both within the office as well as with other U.S. Government agencies, such as United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the CDC, and with multilateral organizations like the Global Fund and WHO. We also receive various requests for information from Congress or the Office of Management and Budget that we are required to answer ASAP. I usually work about 50 hours per week - so, not bad really...*

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What kind of projects are you currently working on?

*Currently, I'm working on a few projects. One of them is a collaboration with the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) to improve PEPFAR reports on spending in the countries where we work. We also use mathematical models to help us to estimate the impact of our treatment and prevention programs. As the "scientist", I've been given the lead on all things related to modeling.*

What's most fun/least fun about the job?

*The most fun thing about the job is that I am constantly meeting new people from other agencies and every day is different. Whether it is a request for information from Congress or a visit from the Secretary of State, you never know what might happen. The least fun thing about my job is the meetings. They go on forever and, I think it is generally acknowledged that, for every hour of meeting, you get about 5 minutes of work done.*

Why did you decide to renew for a 2<sup>nd</sup> year?

*I really felt as though I wouldn't be able to make an impact in just one year. It took about 6 months for me to feel comfortable in my position. I wanted not simply to learn something new, but to actually be of use to the office.*

Do you miss working in the lab?

*I do miss working in the lab! I've actually joined what we call the "Laboratory Technical Working Group," which deals with some of the technicalities of HIV diagnostics so that I can be exposed as much as possible to the laboratory.*

How much "science" is involved in your current work?

*Not very much, honestly. We do try to use evidence-based decision-making as often as possible, but we are often greatly influenced*

*by politics. However, my group of mathematical modelers are a pretty scientific bunch.*

What new skill sets have you developed from the fellowship?

*I have never been a good "networker." This fellowship has forced me outside of my comfort zone in that area which is an extremely good thing. I'm also becoming very familiar with the economics of international aid. Economics was not something that I was ever really interested in, but it is now intrinsic to every decision made in my office.*

What do you see yourself doing after AAAS?

*Funny you should ask, because I was just asked by my office to take a permanent position with them. However, in the future I can also see myself going back to working with another NGO or a nonprofit doing international health work.*

How is your work/life balance?

*My work/life balance is a bit chaotic right now. About 3 months into my fellowship I had a baby boy. I have definitely been struggling with parenthood and making the most of my fellowship and I think I've been successful. I will say though that my social life has taken a real beating.*



*"I learned about many career options that require different combinations of scientific and communication skills, provide opportunities to learn about new areas of science, and require an understanding of broader issues that affect research" - Julie Schneider*

#### JULIE SCHNEIDER, PhD

Julie Schneider completed her PhD at the Institute of Molecular Medicine (Weatherall Institute) at Oxford University in human genetic diversity. Her thesis research focused on understanding the effect of a recombination hot spot on creating patterns of genetic diversity in the beta-globin gene cluster. She then interned at the National Academy of Sciences as part of the Christine Mirzayan Policy Fellowship. Before starting her AAAS fellowship, she worked for a biotech company studying the

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effect of SNP and haplotype diversity on drug response.

Was your AAAS fellowship a good experience?

*My AAAS fellowship was a wonderful experience. During my AAAS fellowship, I learned about many career options that require different combinations of scientific and communication skills, provide opportunities to learn about new areas of science, and require an understanding of broader issues that affect research. Since completing my fellowship, it has been very valuable to be connected to an impressive network of current and former AAAS fellows in the Washington, DC area who are working on a range of important issues in science and technology.*

What skill sets did you develop from your fellowship that impact your work today?

*During my AAAS fellowship, I helped develop two reports addressing possible new models to manage biospecimens for genomic- and proteomic-based cancer research. These reports were based on input from experts in several areas, including: research, pathology, surgery, bioethics, intellectual property law, informatics, and patient advocacy. It was a privilege to meet and work with so many prominent individuals during my fellowship year. As an AAAS fellow, I learned how to design, plan and implement scientific meetings, workshops and discussions to inform the development of new reports, programs and initiatives. I was also extremely fortunate to have several excellent mentors at the NCI who guided my work, gave me significant responsibility over projects and provided many opportunities for me to present the results of these efforts in public.*

What did you do after your fellowship?

*After the conclusion of my year as an AAAS Fellow, the NCI hired me to continue working in the NCI Office of the Director. For several years, I helped coordinate the development of best practices for managing biospecimens for cancer research. This involved managing a trans-NCI committee who oversee NCI-supported biospecimen resources and organizing several meetings and conferences of extramural experts on this topic. Approximately one year ago, I began a long-term assignment for the NCI in China. I am now based at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing. My*

*primary responsibility is to establish an NCI Office of China Cancer Programs that will support the development of new partnerships with research institutions and cancer research experts in China.*

What is your current job like? How many hours do you work per week? How is your work/life balance?

*My job is very exciting because it is at the intersection of scientific research and international cooperation. Working on science policy in a different culture is challenging, and typically results in long work weeks. I frequently participate in teleconferences at night to accommodate the time difference between the U.S. and China. Work/life balance overseas can be challenging at times, but the opportunity to build international cooperation in this area is truly unique.*

What kind of projects are you currently working on?

*I am currently working to complete a draft NCI Strategic Plan for expanding cancer research partnerships with Chinese institutions. The purpose of the plan is to: 1) summarize NCI's existing work in China; 2) provide an overview of the cancer research system in China, highlighting key similarities and differences in policymaking, funding, and research; and 3) suggest high-priority scientific areas for expanded research cooperation of interest to both countries. Over the next 6-12 months, I plan to assist the NCI in organizing workshops of U.S. and Chinese experts to inform the development of new collaborative pilot projects.*

What's most fun/least fun about your current job?

*It has been very exciting to learn about biomedical research in China, to meet many Chinese experts, to suggest research priorities and possible partnership models and to assist the NCI leadership in designing a new international program. I would have to say that the least fun part of my job is surviving Beijing rush hour traffic!*

Do you miss working in the lab?

*I do not miss conducting laboratory experiments, but I sometimes miss learning about cutting edge*

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ideas and findings before they have been published and widely disseminated.

How much "science" is involved in your current work?

*I no longer conduct scientific research, but I frequently read scientific papers, and I apply many of the skills that I learned during my time in the laboratory to my daily work such as: attention to detail, troubleshooting, critical thinking, and analysis.*

Do you have any advice for scientists who are thinking about transitioning into a non-lab science career?

*First, I would recommend conducting as many informational interviews as possible with people who are working in a field of interest. These discussions will provide information and perspectives that may not be available in the laboratory environment. Next, I would recommend identifying fellowship and internship opportunities to experiment directly with the possibility of transitioning to a non-laboratory career. Finally, I would advise scientists to be excited and optimistic about the different opportunities available – there are many interesting science-related issues to work on and explore.*

#### Applying for a AAAS Fellowship

If you are interested in applying for a AAAS Fellowship, details can be found at <http://fellowships.aaas.org>. The online applications opened September 1st, with a December 15<sup>th</sup> deadline. You'll hear back from AAAS in the Spring, and then the program starts in September. Stipends are generous at \$73,000 to \$92,000 depending on experience. You have to have a PhD or equivalent doctoral-level degree, and you must be a US citizen. Fellowships are available in five programmatic areas: (1) Congressional, (2) Diplomacy, Security and Develop-

ment (3) Energy, Environment and Agriculture (4) Health, Education and Human Services and (5) Roger Revelle Global Stewardship. Global Stewardship may not be available this year.

In order to find out what AAAS is looking for in an applicant, I consulted with Cynthia Robinson, Director of the AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellowships. She had this to say, "Of course, successful candidates must first have excellent scientific or technical credentials pertinent to their career stage. But that's not all we're looking for. We seek scientists and engineers who show a commitment to apply their expertise in a broader policy realm, who have the ability to communicate about science and technology with

non-scientists, and who have enthusiasm to address societal challenges." Other recommendations from the AAAS office to strengthen your application included the following: learn more about the science/policy interface, take a course in public policy, get involved in campus governance (join FYI for example), volunteer in the community, be active in scientific associations, interact with young people to pass along your passion for science. "We're not looking for people with a lot of policy experience - that's what the fellowships are designed to provide," Robinson explained. "We want individuals who are interested in

learning about science and its role in policy and who can demonstrate that interest in their application." Everyone I've interacted with from AAAS has been very friendly and helpful. Also, there was an AAAS representative at the career fair at the FYI Retreat this past year. We are hoping AAAS will have a table again in 2010.

Submitted by:  
Katie Stagliano

*In addition to the AAAS, there are a multitude of policy internship and fellowship programs available. AAAS has an extensive list on their website. Some sponsors include: the Academy of Medical Sciences and the Wellcome Trust, American Academy of Arts & Sciences, American Institute of Biological Sciences, American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, American Society of Human Genetics, Department of Commerce, NASA, National Human Genome Research Institute, Office of Personal Management and Research!America.*

## FYI Social Event—Summer Picnic

On Saturday, August 29th, the FYI held a picnic at Seneca Creek State Park. This was an event attended by more than 25 people that included fellows, friends and family. A good time was had by all, with lively conversations and participation in various activities such as balloon races and hitting a piñata.

Watch out for future announcements for other social activities to be held throughout the year. It is an opportunity to meet other trainees outside of the lab and also have a good time.



Pictures from the FYI picnic. Top right: Two individuals throwing a football . Middle left: Fellows enjoying some ice-cream while talking science. Lower left: Individuals participating in the relay game. Lower right: Results from the balloons and beakers game.



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