Welcome to the Spring edition of the PDA Newsletter! Greetings from your fellow postdoc PDA co-chairs. After this long winter (light snow in May, really Rochester?), Spring/Summer is near, and with that great opportunities arise to get out of the lab and take steps to continue to grow your personal and professional career.

Last March, I (Cristiano) attended the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) annual meeting and got the opportunity to network with fellows postdocs from across the US. All the speakers at the meeting agreed on the importance of fostering leadership and management skills during our postdoctoral training. Managing your postdoc is not an easy task and, in addition to the traditional day-to-day research tasks (discipline-specific conceptual knowledge, research skill development and responsible conduct of research), requires you to master a set of equally important core competencies such as communication skills, professionalism, and leadership and management skills. The good news is that, no matter what career path you will follow, these core competencies are important for any career path and this makes you more versatile than you may think.

Here at the PDA, our goal is to provide opportunities to get you closer to your career goals. Our most recent and future events intend to help you strengthen your core competencies and to help you network with professionals to better transition to the career of your choice.

It is comforting to stick with a routine while working as a postdoc. We write our to-do lists of familiar experiments and exchange ideas with friends whom we know so well. While the comfort-zone feels good, it can also be an opportunity killer. Most of the time, there is a reason why we stick to our comfort zone, and that reason is fear. One way that I (Asli) overcame my fear of the unknown was taking small steps towards trying new things. I first got involved with the Postdoctoral Association (PDA), where I met new postdocs and learned their different approaches to professional development. By participating to the PDA meetings, I then got the opportunity to learn about the URBEST (Broadening Experiences in Scientific Training) program, which "seeks to better prepare graduate students and postdoctoral trainees for careers outside of academia, encouraging career exploration and personal growth". This was exactly what I was looking for and it was just a few steps away from the comfort of my familiar lab. I registered to be a URBEST trainee, which made it possible for me to attend a data science program. None of these could have been possible if I hadn’t sought to be a part of the PDA. Now, I am happy to say that my once out of comfort zone experience became my new comfort, and with every new challenge, now there is less fear and far more excitement.

This summer, take a small step to expand your comfort zone and attend a PDA meeting. Maybe, take one more step and become a member of the PDA which would only take an hour a month. Before you know it, you will connect with many UR fellow postdocs, faculty and administrative staff, and be aware of all the unique opportunities that our University has to offer.

So be brave, think outside of the box and most of all be ready: Opportunities can knock at your door when you less expect them, and “they don’t waste time with those who are unprepared”.

Asli and Cristiano
PDA Co-Chairs
Postdoctoral Association Activities in Pictures
Wanaruk Chaimayo, PhD

15th August 2015: PDA Picnic at Mendon Pond Park, Rochester

21st September 2015: National Postdoc Appreciation Week (NPAW) | Poster Session at Flaum Atrium, URMC

22nd September 2015: NPAW | Job interview by Andrea Holland at Ryan Case Method, URMC

25th September 2015: NPAW | Happy Hour at Bunga Burger

16th December 2015: Postdoc Recruitment Holiday Lunch (Indian Food) at River Campus

8th April 2016: PDA Friday 2PM Coffee Club at URMC
Get to know PDA Committee

Aslihan Ambeskovic
Biostats. and Computational Bio.
PDA Co Chair
585.273.1445

Cristiano Tapparello
Electrical & Computer Engineering
PDA Co Chair
585.275.2099

Patrice Tankam
Optics
585.273.4037

Subam Basuthkar
Flaum Eye Institute

Wanaruk Chaimayo
Biosensing, Dermatology
Newsletter Editor
585.275.1977

Vijaya Balakrishnan
Biomedical Genetics
Newsletter Editor

Amy Perazzo
Graduate Education & Postdoctoral Affairs
SMD
PDA Advisor
585.273.4650

Sharon McCollough
Graduate Education & Postdoctoral Affairs
SMD
PDA Advisor
585.273.5210

Jay Garaycochea
Pharmacology and Physiology

Cheryl Ernst
Graduate Studies
ASE
PDA Advisor
585.273.5210

Janice Van Opporp
Graduate Studies
ASE
PDA Advisor
585.275.5672

Join PDA?
Would you like to be part of the PDA committee? Please come participate with us every 2nd Tuesday of the month at 12:30. Please email wanaruk_chaimayo@urmc.rochester.edu to ask for location which alternates between River Campus and the Medical Center.

Join our Facebook group
By searching “University of Rochester - Postdoc Association”
(or click this link)

Or use your smartphone to scan this QR code

Why join a UR PDA Committee?
Be involved at U of R beyond conducting scientific research.
Improve your networking by interacting with peers, top-level scientists, and university administrators.
Build your management, leadership, and communication skills—a selling point for your next job search.
Learn about planning and organizing meetings, seminars and other events of your interests while educating other postdocs.

We realize as a postdoc your time is valuable. The executive committee meets only once a month for an hour. Otherwise, any additional time commitment is completely your decision.

Please visit the online versions of our newsletters @
YoUR Postdoc Press

Editors
Wanaruk Chaimayo
Vijaya Balakrishnan

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Transitioning to Industry: Panel Discussion
Jay Garaycochea, PhD

Last May, the University of Rochester Postdoctoral Association invited three alumni who had used their Ph.D to pursue careers outside academia. Mustimbo Roberts, Ph.D, Senior Research Investigator at Bristol-Myers Squibb, Yeissa Chabrier-Rosello, Ph.D, Microbiology Reviewer at the FDA, and Olivia Block, Ph.D, Patent Technical Specialist at LeClairRyan joined us to discuss how they navigated and adjusted their training in order to prepare their resume, as well as to answer the questions of postdocs and graduate students interested in similar careers.

Here are the highlights from the panel session:

You need to let your mentor know if you are interested in pursuing a career outside of academia as soon as you can, whether you are in graduate school or in a postdoc position. The type of training you receive may be different by focusing on management and opportunities away from the bench. Making connections and networking with other scientists in careers that interest you can help you learn what types of skills and experience are needed when applying for desired positions. Using your mentors network as well as internship opportunities can help let people know of your interest in a career in industry.

Be sure to build your CV in a manner that demonstrates your relevant skills and experiences for the position in which you are applying, and individualize each application keeping in mind the mission statement of the organization. LinkedIn is an excellent tool for maintaining and extending your network, which in turn can help in finding open positions and being moved to the top of the list. Recruiters can be helpful for finding opportunities, but some may not be experienced with helping Ph.Ds.

Deciding whether to apply directly to industry positions straight after graduate school or to obtain a postdoc position first depends on the position you seek. Drug discovery and clinical trials typically require postdoc experience, but that experience only is required to be 1-2 years long. However, staying in a postdoc for 5 years may make you an undesirable candidate. There are also postdoc positions in industry that allow you to pass many entry level positions. Government positions can be more flexible, as they will hire Ph.Ds from both academic and industry backgrounds, as well as having postdoc positions available.

An interview goes through many stages and can be an extensive process. Most start with a phone interview with a recruiter or hiring manager that make sure you have the qualifications they are seeking. Next would be a formal interview which typically lasts all day. You will meet with many people from throughout the company and will have to present a seminar based on your research. During the hour seminar, it is important to tell a cohesive story rather than just displaying data and figures. Be sure to ask questions about the company to find if you would be a good fit. Follow up with thank you emails to everyone you met within 24 hours, and try to include some mention of your conversation with that person.

Once you have obtained a position, seek out a formal and informal mentor at your organization. Mentors will help you navigate through learning the ins and outs of your new job. Even though the average time at any position is 2 years, do not be afraid of layoffs. There is typically a fair amount of notice given before a layoff and may include a severance package to help during the subsequent job search. This is where keeping a strong network can help, as colleagues and friends you make while working in industry can keep you stay informed of any positions that become available. While you are employed you will occasionally receive job offerings, and while you may not be interested in switching positions it is a good idea to pass that offer to colleagues or friends who may be interested.
Why have I searched out non-traditional positions?

I’m a realist. One in two hundred and twenty two PhD’s ever achieve the title of professor. Less than 30% of those newly minted professors are granted tenure. Don’t get me wrong, I am as competitive as the next person, and love the idea of winning the PI lottery and running my own lab at some point in the future. It would be a great honor and point of pride to do so. But why put all my eggs and effort into one career “basket”? Especially when there are so many other career paths that allows you to contribute to the advancement of science, mentor others, and build your professional network for the future. So when I came to URMC, I took a look around, saw all these opportunities I could take advantage of while I am a postdoc, and decided it was a great idea. Actually, a URBEST idea, truth be told. I wouldn’t have known about it at all had Tracey Bass not forwarded that call for fellows to the initial cohort of URBEST trainees!

What is Kerafast, and what is its mission?

Kerafast is a Boston-based life sciences company looking to grow and foster a community of scientists advancing research by connecting laboratories with the rare reagents otherwise unavailable or only available following completion of a materials transfer agreement. They encourage the community to further scientific progress by providing or procuring novel bioresearch materials, which allows scientists to accelerate their own research and enable other researchers to access the materials they need. Since any Procurer can also be a Provider, the entire interconnected community benefits the Greater Good of Science. These rare and often one-of-a-kind research materials are not developed or manufactured by Kerafast, but are produced by principal investigators in the course of their work. These materials may be in limited supply, but may be just what your experiments require, and we expedite their delivery through a rapid online material transfer ‘click license’ agreement for research use.

What does your fellowship entail?

First of all, to not interfere with my research responsibilities, I am contractually bound to not exceed five hours a week fulfilling my duties. This was an important detail, to assure both my Mentor and myself that this wouldn’t too much of a distraction. Nevertheless, it requires good time management skills to weave in time between experiments and my other responsibilities.

So how do I spend this time? Most of my time in a given week is spent reading papers of prospective providing PI’s, finding time to speak with PI’s and trainees to build interest in Kerafast, and overcome possible intellectual property issues by consulting with the licensing managers at UR Ventures. One priority here is to raise awareness of Kerafast as a potential go-to resource for the many different research teams here at UR, in case any listed reagent could be of benefit said research. This latter priority is what lead me to join forces with the UR PDA, so I could network with more of my peers and showcase the benefits of working with Kerafast to you all. No doubt, if you have attended UR PDA functions recently, I’ve been there, handing out my card and inviting you to coffee to talk more about your research! Go ahead, take advantage of it!

(Continued on the next page..)
I also spend a fair amount of my time communicating my efforts back to the company and the other Kerafast fellows. This comes via conference calls twice a month: Biweekly with the director of business development to discuss my progress and future plans (and to hold me accountable for meeting my own goals), and a monthly conference call with all the other fellows to discuss successes and obstacles as well as new ideas about how to reach interested providers. We also track our interactions and contacts, and send that along to my director as another way of keeping us accountable and tracking progress. For those obsessed about notebooking and organization, it’s a joy. For the less organized of us (like yours truly), it’s a welcome challenge and way to be held accountable for your efforts and improve your organizational skills.

**How do you think this has benefited you as an early career scientist?**

Taking on this fellowship has definitely expanded my network, both within and outside of UR. There are 15 other Kerafast fellows right now, at institutions like Emory, Tufts, University of Georgia, Wistar, University of Buffalo, and Michigan State, to name a few. We’re all coached to expand our network as much as possible as an early career scientist, and this sure was one way to do it! It has enabled me to work with some of the licensing managers here at UR Ventures, specifically Matan Rapoport and Weimin Kaufman, both of whom have been wonderful resources as I learn more about the MTA process and intellectual property issues.

Another way this has benefited me as an early career scientist is to open my eyes to all the work done by the University’s Technology Transfer office (TTO). The duties of which are shared UR Ventures and the Office of Research Project Administration (ORPA) at UR. The licensing managers I have met are brilliant PhD’s with MBAs as well, and their position requires them to familiarize themselves with a wide range of research topics on top of the legalese necessary to do their job. No matter where my career path now takes me, I have a much better understanding of their place within the university and a healthy respect for what they do after working with them.

**What other opportunities has this opened up for you, career-wise?**

The most obvious opportunity would be join Kerafast full-time sometime in the future. I don’t plan on leaving the bench just yet, but having experience outside of the lab in a more structured and professional environment will certainly pay dividends. Everyone I’ve interacted with in the company, from the CEO Dr. Robert Bondaryk and the head of the fellowship program, Dr. Amelia Gibson, to the accounting and technology teams, have been superbly professional and accommodating since joining the team. Everyone should be so lucky as to have bosses as passionate and dedicated as they are.

Without this fellowship, I would not have met any of these wonderful people, and had the chance to learn from their experiences. Now, I not only have contacts in those fields, but I also have actionable experience in that space if I ever decide to pursue such a path in my career.

**The author**

Anthony obtained his Ph.D. in Microbiology and Immunology from Albany Medical College in 2014. Before that he worked as a clinical microbiologist and is a proud graduate of the Rochester General Hospital School of Medical Technology. He now resides in the laboratory of B. Paige Lawrence, studying the effects of environmental pollutants and aryl hydrocarbon receptor activation on dendritic cell function during respiratory viral infection. Beyond that, he dreams of distilling his own whiskey and finding time to sleep.
This month marks my seven month work-iversary here at the University of Rochester. Since that first day in September, I have been inundated with ideas, encouragement and enthusiasm all while feeling an undercurrent of a common theme: the employment market for PhD graduates and Postdocs has shifted away from academia. Armed with this idea, I started doing some research. Did you know that each year there are almost seven times the number of PhDs awarded than new faculty positions created? Astonishing; where do all these highly trained folks go? And before you say “they’re probably all unemployed”, know that the unemployment rate for advanced degree holders (as of 2013) is incredibly low – only 2.1 percent in the STEM fields as compared to 6.3 percent for the larger workforce. So that’s encouraging – while academic jobs seem to be drying up, at least folks are still finding work… but where? A little more research yields that only about 43 percent of all doctoral degree holders in the United States are employed in academic positions.

So if 43 percent of scientific PhD holders wind up in academia that means 57 percent are out there doing something else. Factoring in that only 2.1 percent find themselves unemployed, that means that the majority of scientific PhD’s in the US are pursuing ‘alternative’ careers (you can see this in the visual attached). Further expounding shows that of this majority in biomedical graduates, only about 59 percent are still in positions closely related to their fields. Now while this may scare some, think of the potential! We are taught specialized skillsets and focus on a narrow path for so long that it is refreshing to see that the majority of degree holders are actually leveraging their skills, knowledge and experience to find worthwhile and rewarding careers doing a variety of different things. So as the market shifts, those of us with advanced degrees seem to be doing just fine finding positions utilizing our skillsets and specialized knowledge. The hard work, long hours and intense research you are completing now creates a desirable skillset that can literally place you in a position on any career path that you choose. Need proof? Here are some local examples that the UR BEST program has brought in during their Career Stories Series.

With all that said, finding a position in academia isn’t impossible. While the market may be shifting, there are still positions out there; they have just become a bit more competitive. The trick to finding any position now is making a choice for yourself and following through with the work to land the job. Luckily, you have a Center for Professional Development to help you understand how to leverage your knowledge, skills and experience successfully. Specifically, our goal is to target your areas of interest, assist you with developing a networking strategy, and improve your skills and marketing ability to ensure you are seen as a competitive candidate. Yes it might be hard work and challenging, but you know all about a good challenge, don’t you? Let’s work together to help you advance. Read through some of our Success Stories, check out our Resources and schedule an appointment with us Here to take the next step in your journey.

- Reference
The resurgence of Star Wars has rekindled our desire to be one with the Force and that incredibly wise Jedi Master, Yoda. However, awaken your scientific writing skills, Jedi tricks can not (although, I guess it could not hurt to try). Have no fear, though, the Life Sciences Writing Specialist in the Center for Professional Development (CPD) can help!

‘Writing’ is a word that conjures up a variety of emotions in scientists. Even the most skilled writers can battle mental chaos when writing a manuscript or grant. Add a deadline, and these stifling feelings can worsen. Often times these feelings are the result of postdocs and students believing themselves inadequate writers, having likely never been formally trained to write. Even more onerous is the worry that the science about which one is writing has not been completely developed. This combination can easily lead to writer’s procrastination!

Being a trained research scientist, I spent countless hours at the bench, designing experiments, optimizing assays, acquiring that perfect image, and...well...consequentially developing writer’s procrastination. Thus, I know very well that the focus at the bench detracts from clearly communicating protocols and novel findings. However, as I grew in my research my desire to write grew in parallel. Once I started notchting out time to write, I realized that I enjoyed writing as much as pipetting! I began honing my skills by writing manuscripts, crafting grants, and offering writing help to my colleagues. Now, I am excited to be applying my skills to assist all University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry trainees with their writing projects!

As the Life Sciences Writing Specialist I commonly hear worries such as, ‘I do not know how to begin’, ‘no one ever taught me how to write’, and ‘I do not know how to organize my data.’ I understand these overwhelming feelings and appreciate that writing is an anxiety building aspect of a scientist’s career. My goal is to ease that anxiety by providing trainees the tools and encouragement to develop their writings skills.

Postdocs and students can meet with me one-on-one or attend group based learning workshops to discuss their writing projects. My mission is to supplement each trainee’s excellent scientific training by providing new insights and tools to become effective scientific writers. As an example, I challenge all trainees to “Write 20”: dedicate at least 20 minutes a day to writing! This is as simple as summarizing your lab notebook at the end of each day. Such an approach will develop writing skills on a daily basis, keep lab notebooks updated, and even provide written results or methods that could actually be used in a manuscript or grant! Bonus - doing this will also keep your PI happy!

All scientists, no matter what career paths they choose, will be presented with opportunities (yes, I said opportunities - not just expectations) to write. I want to insure that each of our trainees feels confident in his/her ability to write clearly and effectively!
There are many challenges on the road to transitioning to industry. I talked to UR alum, Wen Shen who not too long ago made the jump to Industry. She is currently the Assistant Director, Core Research Department of Ionis Pharmaceuticals, Inc., a leader in antisense therapeutics.

Please tell us a little bit about your academic background.

After graduating from Shanghai Jiao Tong University (Shanghai, China) in 2007 with my B.S. degree in Biological technology, I came to the University of Rochester and joined Dr. Robert Bambara’s lab to pursue my Ph.D. in Biochemistry. In 2012, I started my two-year post-doc training at Ionis Pharmaceuticals, Inc. (formerly Isis Pharmaceuticals, Inc.). Currently, I am an assistant director at the Core Research department of Ionis Pharmaceuticals, Inc.

What is your current role at Ionis?

As a member of the core research group at Ionis, my job is to understand mechanistic basis of our drugs. I am answering questions such as “how the drugs get into the cells and find its target?”, “do they interact with cellular proteins?”, or “can we further improve the potency and safety profile of our drugs?”

Why did you decide to transition to industry?

My passion to advance medicine started with my undergraduate research in personalized medication and continued throughout my graduate study to understand HIV replication. When the time came, it was not a difficult decision for me to transition from academia to industry, since a job at pharmaceutical industry perfectly bridges the bench-to-bedside gap. In addition, the research projects at Ionis allow me to continue to pursue my interests in RNA biology, but in a more translational manner.

Is research in industry all that different from academia?

It entirely depends on the responsibilities of each individual position. For me, it is not that different. I still have the freedom and independence to experiment many ideas that spark my interest. It seems to be a common misconception that scientists in industry cannot publish their work. In contrast, at Ionis, I am encouraged to work on a variety of different topics that lead to new discoveries, publications, and patents. In addition, extensive collaborations nowadays between biotech companies and universities allow scientists in industry to still stay on top of the advancements and progresses in academia. In my opinion, one biggest difference in research between academia and industry is the speed. Most pharmaceutical companies are extremely fast-paced and oriented towards productivity.

How did your training at University of Rochester prepare your career in industry?

My experience in nucleic acid-protein interaction as well as RNase H1 biochemistry, which was built in Dr. Bambara’s lab at UR, allowed me to transit smoothly and rapidly into my research projects at Ionis. In addition, I also gained knowledge in different aspects of RNA biology through working collaboratively with many RNA biologists at UR, which benefit my career at Ionis a lot considering Ionis as the pioneer and leader in the RNA-targeted therapeutic space.

The Biotech industry job market is very competitive.

a. How did you find your first job?
b. What advice would you give somebody who is interested in transitioning to industry?

(Continued on the next page.)
I started at Ionis as a postdoctoral-fellow immediately after finishing my graduate school. At that time, Ionis was looking for someone in the field of RNA biology, in particular, RNA-protein interaction. Since my experience matched with all the job requirements, I got interviewed and later hired.

I have two suggestions for anyone who are looking for a foot in the door at a company. The first one is to consider a post-doc training in biotech, which is the road less-traveled. If you set your heart on biotech industry, why not get some first hand experience by getting into the environment. Although a post-doc appointment does not guarantee a permanent position later in the same company, having some industry experience will still be very beneficial in continuing and advancing you career in other places. I also want to clarify that taking an industry position does not necessarily close the door back to academia. In fact, we have scientists who decided to take what they have learned from Ionis and then returned to academia after their post-doc training.

My second suggestion is to carefully assess your qualifications versus job requirements before applying for a position. This is from my experience being a job seeker previously as well as now as a hiring manager. What employer doesn’t want employees who will hit the ground running? The secret to landing an industry job is “fit”. So, instead of sending out resumes to many jobs that don’t match your skill set, focus on a few positions that fit your research experience and interest the best so that you can customize your resume and highlight your qualifications.

There is a lot of pressure in research to publish. How do you manage to publish well and be successful?

Since joining Ionis, I published two first-author papers along with a few co-authored works. I benefited tremendously by the research environments at Ionis. First, I have been fortunate to have excellent mentors who put a lot of emphasis on publishing the science. Second, most projects in industry are interdisciplinary. I have great access to colleagues and academia collaborators who are experts in biology, chemistry, bioinformatics, toxicologist, and statistics. This collaborative research environment is not only efficient but also intellectually stimulating. Additionally, when funding is not the limiting factor in conducting research, so I could totally immerse myself in the science.

How do you maintain your work life balance?

It is indeed quite difficult to maintain work life balance, especially in a fast pace industry and a challenging position. I find that efficient scheduling can sometimes help a lot. For example, if I can arrange my experiments during the early part of the day or before long meetings, I then have enough time to do analysis later on, without worrying about staying late to finish the job.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

It is truly difficult to foresee ten years of my career in an ever-changing industry. But I know that I want to make a positive impact on biotech industry ten years from now. I can see myself in a leadership role, taking more responsibilities, advancing current drug design, implementing new drug platform, and most importantly, growing with the advances in biotechnology and biotech industry.
**JAY GARAYCOCHEA**  
*Department of Pharmacology & Physiology*

**Publication:**  

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**MICHAEL P. WILSON**  
*Department of Cardiology*

**Publication:**  

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**VIRGINIA GLAZIER**  
*Department of Pediatric*

**Award:**  
Pediatric infectious diseases, NIH F32 grant

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**CAMILLE R. QUINN**  
*Department of Psychiatry*

**Accomplishments:**  
Dr. Camille R. Quinn was selected in the second cohort of scholars to participate in the NIMH Mixed Methods training at Harvard University, 6/13-15/16. In addition, Dr. Quinn successfully completed a two-year NIMH T32 postdoctoral fellowship in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Rochester Medical Center on March 31st and started an Assistant Professor position at The Ohio State University College of Social Work on May 2nd.

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**WANARUK CHAIMAYO**  
*Department of Dermatology*

**Publication**  


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**Call for Entries!**  
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Why join a UR PDA Committee?

Be involved at U of R beyond conducting scientific research.

Improve your networking by interacting with peers, top-level scientists, and university administrators.

Build your management, leadership, and communications skills—a selling point for your next job search.

Learn about planning and organizing meetings, seminars and other events of your interests while educating other postdocs.

We realize as a postdoc your time is valuable. The executive committee meets only once a month for an hour. Otherwise, any additional time commitment is completely your decision.

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