

# THE PGA POST

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DANA-FARBER  
POSTDOC AND  
GRADUATE STUDENT  
ASSOCIATION

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## 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Postdoc and Grad Student Retreat

Mark your calendars for Friday, **September 23<sup>rd</sup>**. when we, postdocs and graduate students, celebrate our Annual Retreat at the Holiday Inn at Beacon Hill.

This is *no* ordinary meeting. This is *our* meeting. And it is for free in our own town. It is *from* postdocs and grad students *to* postdocs and grad students. See the difference? It is not just your average meeting. You get to see what your peers are doing, share exciting science, network, and of course, have fun.

This year, the retreat opens with a career development talk by *Science* columnist, **David Jensen**, followed by a keynote lecture by **Dr. Robert Weinberg** from MIT. Later, we will listen to oral presentations from postdocs and grad students whose abstracts have been selected. There will be games and raffle prizes too. There will be lunch (a customized, selected menu, as a matter of fact),

and to finalize our celebration we will have a cocktail hour with exquisite hors d'oeuvres and drinks. And yes, it's free! To top it all, you will enjoy a 360-degree view of the city of Boston and the Charles River from all of our conference rooms.

Do you want to take part in this event and have fun? You can participate at two levels: 1) Actively, by submitting an abstract for an oral communication and/or poster session. This is the best way to show off and let your peers know what you do best: science! And the best oral presentations and posters will be awarded with a coveted prize

that must remain secret (for now!), or 2) Semi-passively, which means that all you need to do is register (for free) on our website and attend like you would any other meeting. (<http://dfcionline.org/departments/postdoc/retreat/>) Registration will open during the month of August. To facilitate your commute, you can take the free shuttle provided by Partners. If you prefer public transportation, take the Red Line to MGH/Charles.

Don't be a stranger and come join us! You deserve to treat yourself!



## Where @ DFCI?



Do you know where this is?

Send your answer to

[dfci\\_pgapost@dfci.harvard.edu](mailto:dfci_pgapost@dfci.harvard.edu)

Correct answers will be entered into a raffle for a gift card!

## National Postdoc Appreciation Week 2011

Attention, fellow postdocs! Your hard work is being celebrated again this year! Come enjoy a variety of activities planned by the PGA office as part of the National Postdoc Appreciation Week, Sept 19 through 23.

On Monday, Sept 19, join Dr. Benz, Dr. Rollins and Beverly Ginsburg-Cooper for a reception at 4 pm in

Yawkey 308/309. On Tuesday, Sept 20, start the day with coffee and bagels at 10 am in Smith 347, and learn more about what the PGA is doing for the postdoc and graduate student community. Wednesday's event is not yet determined, and your suggestions are welcome. For the ice cream lovers, grab a scoop or two

and mingle at the Ice Cream Social at 3 pm on Thursday, Sept 22, in Dana 1620. The week will end on a high note with the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Postdoc and Graduate Student Retreat on Friday, Sept 23, a fun event highlighted above.

Mark your calendars and take a break to savor your moment in the lime light!

## Finding an Industry Job—Insights from Madathia Sarkissian, Ph.D.

Dr. Madathia Sarkissian has a PhD from the University of Massachusetts School of Medicine, was a postdoc in Dr. Thomas Roberts' lab in the Cancer Biology department at DFCI, and is currently a scientist at Constellation Pharmaceuticals. Madathia has kindly agreed to let us in on the secrets that led to his attaining that much-coveted industrial position!

**How did you search for open positions?** There are a number of key websites to search when looking for biotech and pharmaceutical job openings. These include: Massachusetts Biotechnology Council ([www.massbio.org/careers](http://www.massbio.org/careers)), Indeed.com, Monster.com, BioSpace.com, and CareerBuilder.com. Each company has their own preference for where they post jobs, so it is important to use all of the above resources. Also, be sure to check out the "careers" section on the website for any company in which you are particularly interested. Start-up companies often lack a full-time HR department, so reach out to recruiters in order to access jobs that are not publicly advertised.

**Was networking essential?** Networking certainly does not hurt. You will increase your chances of landing an interview at a company if you can get your CV directly to the desk of the person who will make the hiring decision.

**Tell us about the interview process.** The interview process generally encompasses a number of stages. The first step is usually a phone screen with an HR representative or with the hiring manager. These individuals review CVs, call 5-to-10 top candidates, and then narrow down their choice to a short list of 3-to-5 individuals, who will be invited for on-site interviews. During the interview, the company may ask you to present a seminar and also talk to a number of individuals, including executive management, your potential supervisor, your potential team members, and an HR rep, before making the final decision and extending a formal job offer.

**In your opinion, what are the most important qualifica-**

**tions that an applicant should have when applying to biotech?** Strong critical thinking skills, scientific creativity, and a solid work ethic are the most important qualifications for any scientist in industry (or for that matter, in academia); it is also essential that your technical skills match those needed for the position.

**Did your publications play a key role?** The importance of publications varies widely. In some situations, a high-profile publication is key to obtaining a particular job; for other positions, specific skills are the key determinants. Your cover letter should highlight high-profile publications, but do not let the lack of such papers deter you from starting your job search.

**Were there any surprises for you in terms of differences between the cultures of industry versus academia?** In academia, experiments are often undertaken with the understanding that the researcher owns the project and is responsible for mov-



ing it forward and bringing it to completion. In industry, all members of the company work toward common objectives and goals that are set by the management: each team member performs a specific aspect of a shared project according to his/her expertise, allowing the company to rapidly advance a project.

**What advice can you give to current postdocs who may be interested in finding a career in industry?** Start your job search early. Even under the best of circumstances, it can take 6 months to 1 year to interview, find a good fit between you and an employer, and secure an official job offer. Give yourself time to maximize your potential for finding a position where you will enjoy the scientific work as well as the company culture.

## International Destinations—Near and Far

Benjamin Haibe-Kains, PhD, a postdoctoral Research Fellow in Computational Biology and Biostatistics from Bruxelles, Belgium, shares his favorite locations with us:

**Nicest place near his home:** Grand Place, historical center of Bruxelles

In addition to its unique architecture and excellent degree of conservation (the city town hall was built in 1402), it may be one of the best places in Europe to get immersed in many different cultures.

Website: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand\\_Place](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Place)



**Nicest place in the Boston area:** Manchester-By-The-Sea Beach, Beautiful small beach. It is usually not crowded, very clean and safe, perfect for families. During the summer, the water is just fresh enough to enjoy a sunny day.  
Website: [www.manchester.ma.us](http://www.manchester.ma.us)

**By train:** North Station, commuter rail towards Newburyport/Rockport, 50 min trip.  
**By car:** There are parking lots nearby but expect to pay up to \$25/day for parking!

# How to Initiate a Recycling Program in Your Lab

A multitude of trash is generated each day in the laboratories around DFCI, including pipette wrappers and boxes, plastic bottles, Styrofoam racks, etc. These items end up wasting valuable landfill space and polluting the environment. So, what can you do to reduce your lab's environmental impact? The Dana-Farber Recycling Team, in collaboration with several major biological supplies vendors, has put into place the ability to recycle many of the disposables we use every day. In a few simple steps you can initiate a recycling program in your lab!

First, designate and label three large, empty card-

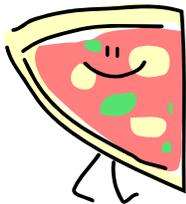


board boxes for recycling. One for BD Falcon pipette wrappers and tissue culture packaging, a second for all Corning pipette boxes, plastic wrap, conical tube Styrofoam racks and other Corning casings, and the third box will be reserved for USA Scientific pipette boxes. Inform your lab mates of the new recycling program in

your lab and make it effortless to recycle the BD wrappers by placing small boxes near the tissue culture hoods for temporary collection. When the BD or Corning boxes are full, simply tape them shut, affix an appropriate pre-paid mailing label (search "pipette tip" on the DFCI intranet), and place near the USPS drop

box located at the ambulance entrance of the Dana building. The full USA Scientific recycling box must be taped closed, labeled, and brought to the Smith building loading dock.

To recycle plastic and aluminum bottles, or office paper, simply call (x2-4707) or email ([dfcies@partners.org](mailto:dfcies@partners.org)) Environmental Services, and they will provide the recycling containers. For more information on recycling at DFCI, including recycling of CLP, Denville Scientific, Abgene and Matrix racks, please visit the recycling link on the DFCI intranet. These easy undertakings will make your lab, and the Earth, a little greener!



It's fast approaching noon and your stomach is letting you know that it's time to eat! But your PB&J seems disappointing and the trip to the Yawkey cafeteria or the Galleria doesn't sound so enticing either. What's a hungry scientist to do? If you're looking for some alternate sources of yummy meals, check out these nearby options:

**Souper Salad** has a variety of food options including

## Food Nearby: A short walk for a quick bite!

wraps, pizza, and (as indicated by its name) a very nice salad bar. Come early on a nice day to grab a seat on the outdoor patio.

**Pat's Place** is a hidden gem! It can be found at the end of the Pike in Brigham and Women's and is the place to go if you need a little grease to keep you going. The ordering system can be a bit tricky but its worth it for a delicious cheese steak sub. Try out their breakfast options too!

**The Chinese Food Truck** is located near the quad on the corner across from Vanderbilt Hall. Some people may

be wary of the truck but the long line shows how much it is loved by others! Don't worry though, the service is quick and the portions are quite big.

**O'Naturals** is located on the first floor of the Shapiro Building and offers a variety of quick and healthy options. They use organic and all-natural ingredients and their specialties are soups, salads, and unique flatbread sandwiches.

**The Squealing Pig** is near Brigham Circle. You may have been to this Irish pub for after-work socializing but the food menu makes it a

good lunch spot too. Try one of their pressed sandwiches ("Toasties") or their Tuscan or curry fries.

**Penguin Pizza** is also in Brigham Circle and offers a wide-ranging selection of thin crust pizzas. You could also opt to get just a slice since they're generously portioned! Service can sometimes be slow so don't go right before a critically timed experiment.

Basically there's something for everyone out there! Try out one of these nearby options next time you're in the mood for something different and delicious.

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## Add a new dimension to your grant application to increase the chances of getting it funded!

Incorporate the use of “humanized” mouse models in your next grant submission. Human-mouse chimeric models of the human immune system provide an excellent platform for undertaking translational and preclinical research. Dr. Wayne Marasco’s laboratory in the Department of Cancer Immunology & AIDS, DFCI, has established and characterized various *in vivo* mouse models of the human immune system. Ongoing research explores the feasibility of using these models for studying human immune responses in the context of immunization/infection, engineering fully humanized antibodies, and stem cell biology. These models apply to many types of research, including the studies of infection/pathogenesis and human leukemia/lymphoma, the testing of vaccines and other therapeutic candidates, and the study of human hematopoiesis. The *in vivo* models can also be adapted to stem cell research and to regenerative medicine. If you are interested in a potential collaboration or need more information, please contact Dr. Marasco ([wayne\\_marasco@dfci.harvard.edu](mailto:wayne_marasco@dfci.harvard.edu)).

## PGA calendar

**August 19, 2011** - Brain Lunch

**Sept–Nov 2011** - 5 Session Workshop on Writing Scientific Manuscripts.

**Dates:** Sept. 8, Sept. 22, Oct. 6, Oct. 20, Nov. 3

**Time:** 2:00 - 4:00 PM (\*Oct. 20, 2:30 - 4:30)

**Locations:** Smith 308/309 & JF 836 A/B

**Sept 16, 2011** - Brain Lunch

**Sept 19-23** - National Postdoc Appreciation Week (See front page article for events!)

Events subject to Change. Visit <http://dfcionline.org/departments/postdoc/events/default.aspx> for updates.



**Ask Jen!** Have a question for the PGA? Email [Jennifer\\_Molina@dfci.harvard.edu](mailto:Jennifer_Molina@dfci.harvard.edu)

**Q) Where can I get information about fellowship opportunities?**

A) The Postdoc and Graduate Student Affairs Office, in partnership with the Office of Grants and Contracts, highlights funding opportunities for postdocs in multiple ways. Check out the bulletin board in our office suite, Smith 347. We also send an email newsletter out each week to all postdocs and grad students with a link to current and ongoing grant and fellowship opportunities from our intranet site, including links to the DFCI limited application website and DFCI funding resources website, which is managed by Grants and Contracts. “Funding databases” on this DFCI website give you access to **SPIN (Sponsored Programs Information Network)** – which currently has listings for more than 1,200

funding agencies, and is a great resource to search for funding. For opportunities related to NRSA fellowships check the NIH website ([www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)), in particular the one for the National Cancer Institute (NCI) ([www.nci.nih.gov](http://www.nci.nih.gov)).

The Postdoc and Graduate Student Affairs Office also offers seminars & workshops throughout the year on how to write grant applications and how to find sources of funding. Our next such workshop on this topic, “Finding and Applying for Postdoc Funding Opportunities” is scheduled for Oct 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Helpful Hint:** Access the “RUC Code Sheet” on the Grants and Contracts home page (found on DFCI Online) to find the name of your Grant Management Specialist who can assist you with your applications.



## Curiosity Corner

Many people have turned to “low-carb” diets in order to shed unwanted weight. These diets are based on the principle that restricted carb intake decreases insulin production and forces the body to shift to burning fat, instead of sugar, as its main energy source. Alternatively, it has been suggested that lower insulin levels can be achieved by inhibiting alpha-amylase, an enzyme that is required to break down carbs prior to their absorption. Alpha-amylase inhibitors are naturally found in many foods, including strawberries, raspberries and the white kidney bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*). A recent article in *Nutrition Journal*<sup>1</sup> summarized the results from several case studies which describe the effects of Phase 2<sup>®</sup> Carb Controller (Pharmachem Laboratories), a dietary supplement made entirely of white bean extract. When taken with high-carb foods, Phase 2<sup>®</sup> reduces the amount of time it takes glucose levels to return to baseline, and promotes significant weight loss (~0.5 lbs/week) when compared to placebo.

But does it really work? Although the preliminary data look promising in sedentary overweight individuals, one study revealed that taking Phase 2<sup>®</sup> as part of a weight loss program does not significantly enhance overall weight loss when compared to diet and exercise alone. While exercise seems to be the key to any successful diet, perhaps you’d still like to try pairing this creamy white bean hummus with high-carb snacks such as crackers or fries.

1. Barret and Udani. *Nutrition Journal* 2011, 10:24



~ Nikki’s White Bean Hummus ~

### Reagents:

- 2(15oz.) cans of white beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 head of roasted garlic
- 2 Tbsp. Olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. Tahini
- ½ Tsp. Cumin
- ½ Tsp. Cayenne Pepper
- Juice from one lemon
- Salt to taste

**Protocol:** Combine all ingredients in a food processor and blend until smooth.