

THE PGA POST

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DANA-FARBER
POSTDOC AND
GRADUATE STUDENT
ASSOCIATION

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A Message from the PGA Office



The PGA Newsletter Committee

The PGA and its committee members would like to wish the community of post-docs and graduate students at DFCI a very happy 2011. In this new year, we are extremely pleased to support the release of the second issue of *The PGA Post*. The PGA has witnessed a remarkable surge in post-docs and graduate students volunteering for member-

ship in its various committees since the release of the first issue of *The PGA Post*. We hope that this second issue, which showcases articles about last year's PGA retreat and features interviews with retreat winners, will boost the interest even further.

Currently, we have 20 active members in the different arms of the PGA,

namely the Newsletter, Retreat, Seminar and Social events committees. We are always open to new ideas and we welcome the post-doc and graduate student community to take part in our activities. If you are interested in being a member in any of the PGA committees or simply interested in knowing more about our activities and mandate, please drop by the PGA lounge in Smith 347 or email us at:

megane_malone
@dfci.harvard.edu

We look forward to hearing from you!

Where @ DFCI?



Do you know what or where this is? Send your answer to dfci_pgapost@dfci.harvard.edu. Correct answers will be entered into a raffle for a fun prize!

We would like to extend a special "Thank You" to **Brooke Johnson** for all of her help and support! We wish her the best in her new job at Northeastern University.

Retreat Reflection

Another year of great PGA events has come to a close and, once again, the retreat stands out as a highlight of the past months! Thanks to the generosity and hard work of Brooke Johnson, the PGA Retreat Committee, and all of our attendees, we managed to draw a larger audience than last year, give out bigger prizes, and have more fun!

The keynote speaker Dr. Robert Langer gave a spectacular morning presentation on his exciting work

and on his career as a scientist. Oral as well as poster presentations throughout the day were excellent and stimulating: everywhere you turned, intense discussions were underway, collaborations were forming, ingenuity was sparking, and science was in the air!

After lunch, renowned career lecturer and author Dr. Peter Fiske gave a fascinating Special Lecture on career development for scientists, whether they choose to follow a tradi-

tional or a non-traditional path. His talk was encouraging and full of practical advice. The presentations concluded with a trivia game that everyone enjoyed. Finally, at the cocktail reception, Dr. Barrett Rollins announced the prize winners for oral and poster presentations: two people in each category received a \$1000 travel award. In-depth profiles and interviews with the prize winners are included on Page 2 of this issue.

Straight Talk with the Winners of the Retreat Awards



Elizabeth McKenna

Laboratory of Charles Roberts, Department of Pediatric Oncology
Years at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute: 6
PhD student at Harvard Medical School, defending next year
Home state/country: New York, USA

Oral Presentation
Winner!

Plan for the award money: AACR meeting

Favorite activity at the Retreat: The trivia game with the remote!

On the key to a successful talk: Practice with different audiences and make sure that your slides are clear and don't have too much text on them. I have been fortunate enough to have a lot of experience with presenting my research at joint lab meetings and departmental floor talks. Plus, my PI always gives me a lot of useful feedback.

On unsuccessful experiments: When my experiments don't work, I feel bad: this is one of the hardest parts of being a scientist. But I try to not take it personally, pick myself up, and try it again. I also trouble shoot and think about why it didn't work, and try to repeat it.

Min Ni

Laboratory of Myles Brown, Department of Medical Oncology
Years at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute: 2.5
PhD school: University of Southern California
Home country: China

Oral Presentation
Winner!

Plan for the award money: AACR meeting

On the key to success: We do a lot of data mining, so the most important aspect of my project is to have a clearly articulated hypothesis. Also you need to keep up a good pace and know what your focus is.

On how to prioritize work: You need sufficient knowledge about your project, even the details. Read broadly and talk to a lot of people from different backgrounds, including clinicians and statisticians.

On what to do when experiments don't work: I like to take a break before I come back to the experiment with fresh eyes. I try to think of whether there are ways around the problem - it can save a lot of time.



Sarah Walker

Laboratory of David Frank, Department of Medical Oncology
Years at DFCI: 8, 4 as a grad student and 4 as a postdoc
PhD school: Harvard Medical School
Home state/country: Vermont, USA

Poster Presentation
Winner!

Plan for the award money: San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium

On the key to success: Persevering. And working on multiple projects so that you have something to fall back on when things don't work.

On her teaching experience: I teach Cell Biology at UMass Boston for a class of 120 students. It helps me figure out what my future career goals are. It is a challenging job though, because I'm essentially doing full time work here and part-time work there, and I have to prepare for my class every night - I feel like a student again.

On how to choose a career that fits: Find some opportunity to talk to the people working in the field, or in the company that interests you, or identify a way to collaborate with them. Anything that will help you get more information is useful.

Favorite event at the Retreat: Career talk by Peter Fiske.

Boris Wilson

Laboratory of Charles Roberts, Department of Pediatric Oncology
Years at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute: 4.5
PhD school: University of Utah
Home state/country: Utah, USA

Poster Presentation
Winner!

Plan for the award money: AACR meeting or Gordon Conference

On risk-taking for research: There is always a risk analysis for each project. It is very important to try and take chances, but think things through beforehand. Think of what conclusions can be drawn and how important they are to the whole field. Consult with your PI, because he/she has the most experience on whether or not it might work.

On how to communicate with your PI: Be very well prepared, and have a clear plan. Have a good rationale before proposing a big and expensive experiment. Don't do it simply because you can.

On how to enjoy your work: A lot of times we get caught up in the negative aspects of being a postdoc. In a way, you just have to enjoy the process. Enjoy the little things that do work, and chances are that you will get excited again about the big picture, and about what you are doing.



After Dark—Getting Home from Campus Safely

Post-docs frequently work many off-hours: in the early mornings, late nights, and weekends. With the shortened daylight hours during the winter months, virtually all of us have to commute in the dark. While personal safety is rarely an issue during typical commute times, security becomes more of a challenge when leaving DFCI late at night. So what assistance or guidance does Dana-Farber provide for post-docs/employees who find themselves in this situation?

All employees with a valid DFCI ID can park on campus for free in the Smith

Garage (M-F 4PM-7AM; Weekends/Holidays all day), or in the Dana Garage (M-F 6PM-7AM; Weekends/Holidays 3PM-6AM). Be sure to contact General Services (617-632-3134) to “activate” your ID if you plan to use either one of these parking garages.

For those who regularly park off-site (Landsdowne, Kenmore, Crosstown, and Wentworth lots), you may go to the Dana lobby security desk for a cab voucher to bring you to your car once the MASCO Shuttles have stopped running for the day. Chestnut Hill parkers need to plan ahead if they are go-

ing to be working late and may pick up a free day-pass for Fenway parking.

If you are an MBTA rider, you may pick up a cab voucher from security in the Dana lobby to bring you to a local T station, or you may purchase, by cash or check, a one-day off-site parking pass from General Services (\$11/pass for the Landsdowne, Chestnut Hill, and Wentworth lots; \$6/pass for the Crosstown lot). Up to five passes may be purchased per month. By making use of real-time tracking provided by MBTA/MASSDOT (go to <http://www.mbta.com/>

[rider_tools/apps](#)) and by the MASCO shuttle services (<http://shuttles.masco.org/m>), you can plan an efficient commute. Currently, those commuters who travel via the 17 bus routes that serve the Longwood Medical Area can also avail this feature. MassDOT is planning to expand this to all bus routes by the end of next summer.

For those who walk or bicycle to and from work, remember to stay in well-lit, highly traveled areas. For more information, please visit “Parking and Transportation” on the DFCI Intranet.

Staying Fit on Campus—It’s a Great Deal!

Ever wondered how much it costs to stay fit? Here are some options for DFCI postdocs and graduate students that give easy access to a fitness center without actually burning a big hole in your pocket.

The nearest option is the Fitcorp in the New Research Building (NRB) of Harvard Medical School. A membership that includes all the benefits that this gym has to offer will cost you \$82 each month. Furthermore, DFCI will reimburse up to \$400 of the cost of this membership annually: the DFCI intranet has all of the information you

need for this reimbursement. Additionally, your health insurance will give you a ~\$150 reimbursement annually for being fit. So, your actual cost for staying fit may be as low as \$21 per month! Note that the DFCI and health insurance reimbursements are options you can avail for any fitness center you choose to join.

Other good options are the Boston Sports Clubs – the nearest one is in Allston; it offers special discounts for DFCI employees. Again, look on the Benefits page of the DFCI intranet to find all the information you need to

We encourage you to take advantage of these cheap options to stay fit!



take advantage of this discount. For folks who want a steal, and are willing to travel across the Charles (with your free M2 pass), the Harvard Athletic membership is a great option. You can enroll online or at the counter in the Murr Center for a cost of \$20 per year. This membership will

give you access to the Malkin Athletic Center (MAC) in Harvard Square as well as the Murr Center near the Harvard Stadium in Allston. Both locations have a gym and excellent swimming pools. You also have the option to purchase a family membership for an additional \$100 per year.

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Special thanks to Brooke Johnson and Sonal Jhaveri.
If you are interested in contributing to the PGA Newsletter,
email us at dfci_pgapost@dfci.harvard.edu
Comments and suggestions are also welcomed!

What would you do with 100M?

100,000,000 DNA sequence reads, that is. One hundred million is a big number, but that's how many reads you can now generate from a single lane on the new Illumina HiSeq2000 sequencing machine at the Center for Cancer Computational Biology (CCCB). With 100 million reads you could sequence the complete exome of 2 human samples in a single lane, or you could multiplex ChIP-Seq experiments for 4 transcription factors in that same lane. Interested in RNA-Seq? The CCCB also has the complete workflow in place for profiling mRNA and miRNA, including RNA from FFPE samples, and as for the DNA, they can run multiple samples per lane. From sample prep to sequence analysis, the CCCB provides full service next-generation sequencing for researchers at Dana-Farber and across the Longwood Medical Campus. Give them a call at 617-642-2447, or stop by their offices (Smith building, room 822) if you have exciting ideas about what 100 million DNA sequence reads can do for you. cccb@jimmy.harvard.edu



Ask Megan!

Have a question for the PGA? Email megane_malone@dfci.harvard.edu

Q: Why should I present at a Brain Lunch?

- A: Presenting at a Brain Lunch will give YOU an opportunity to develop your expository skills and prepare presentations in a friendly, supportive and non-threatening atmosphere.
- Through your presentation, YOU have an opportunity to share your research with your peers, and develop the potential for collaborations with other laboratories.
 - By presenting YOU help build a sense of community and cohesiveness among postdocs and graduate students.
 - YOU can use your presentation to rehearse upcoming job talks, invited seminars, or conference presentations.
 - As a presenter YOU have the opportunity to practice your 30-minute presentation and review your slides with Dr. Sonal Jhaveri, Science Program Director.
 - YOU will receive peer feedback, provided by an online evaluation following your presentation.
 - YOUR talk will be video recorded (for your eyes only) so that you may personally review your own performance.
 - YOU also have the opportunity to schedule a follow-up meeting with Dr. Jhaveri to help perfect your presentation.
 - Finally, YOU get free lunch, as pizza is always served!

Interested? Email: konstantin_knoblich@dfci.harvard.edu

PGA calendar

- January 16, 2011** Ice skating in Boston Common (January 23 if bad weather)
- January 21, 2011** Brain Lunch (Hui Feng)
- February 2, 2011** Brain Lunch (Patrik Moskwa)
- March 3, 2011** Strategies for grant writing
- March 18, 2011** Brain Lunch (Sarah Walker)

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

Curiosity Corner

DID YOU KNOW?

1. Exercise boosts stem cells.

A new study reports that endurance exercise (running) enhances muscle stem cells: Rats that spend 13 weeks running on a treadmill for 20 minutes a day show a 20 to 30% increase in the mean number of stem cells per muscle fiber. Older rats show 33 to 47% increase. Since these cells contribute to muscle regeneration after injury or illness, the boost could explain why human exercisers have better muscle function than non-exercisers as they age. Time to hit the gym! (PLoS ONE 2010 Oct 12;5(10):e13307)

2. Did you know that **infants raised by bilingual parents** (father and mother speak different languages to the infant) perform certain tasks better than infants raised by monolingual parents? (*Science* vol 330, Oct 2010, *Cognition* 2008)

3. In a separate study, **the population of Canadian parents**, matched in other respects, **who were raised as bilingual** were shown to have a 5 year delay in the onset of Alzheimer's disease compared to those raised by monolingual parents. Well, what does this mean for people who are multilingual? (*Science* vol 330, Oct 2010, *Neuropsychologia* 45,459, 2007)

