Former Fellow Follow-Up with Frances Fernando, Strategy & Analytics Consultant

Frances Fernando, MPH, completed her postbac research fellowship in the NICHD Contraceptive Development Program under the mentorship of Dr. Diana Blithe from 2019–2021. With Dr. Blithe, she worked on projects analyzing the hormonal profiles and user experience of novel contraceptives in Phase II clinical trials. Simultaneously, Frances detailed at the NIH Fogarty International Center and conducted implementation science research for HIV/AIDS in adolescents living in Sub-Saharan Africa. She currently works as a strategy and analytics consultant for Deloitte, where she supports development of COVID-19 strategy and responses as part of the trans-NIH COVID account.

Check out our Q&A with Frances to learn more about her career path in public health strategy:

What does a strategy and analytics consultant do?
Strategy and analytics consultants help improve processes, identify risks, and develop strategic responses to client concerns. We view problems from a macro-level perspective to identify roadblocks and develop strategic roadmaps to best advance our NIH clients’ goals and their missions.

Each day varies but generally consists of client and internal team calls, developing materials for our clients’ needs, and strategizing the next best steps. We sync with our internal team members multiple times a week to stay up to date on cross-workstream activities and maintain an organized approach.

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Letter from the Editor

When I think of the word *retreat*, two definitions come to mind. First is the forced military drawback of troops, and second is a break from life’s daily tasks for a defined period of reflection. In both senses of the word, the group or individual is pulling back to assess the situation, which will inform a plan to move forward. This month, NICHD fellows have the opportunity for two retreats: the **NICHD Intramural Scientific Retreat on September 20**th and the **NICHD Fellows Retreat on September 29**th. These events are not merely a break from benchwork for the day; they are designed to disseminate knowledge, catalyze discussion, and stimulate collaborative ideas and next steps.

The **Fellows Retreat** has an added bonus. Attendees can learn about various scientific careers through the first-hand experiences of panelists in science administration, policy, academia, industry, and more. To kick off career exploration ahead of the retreat, we follow up with **former fellow Frances Fernando**, a strategy and analytics consultant at Deloitte. In a Q&A session, she describes the role of a strategy and analytics consultant and recounts the experiences that led her to this particular career field.

We wrap up this issue with a big thank you to postdoctoral fellows for all of your hard work. Please join us in showing postdoc appreciation during **National Postdoc Appreciation Week, September 19**th–**23**rd. In honor of this event, we’d like to introduce you to your new NICHD Institutes and Centers postdoc rep, **Dr. Hyo Won Ahn**. She will represent the interests of NICHD postdoctoral fellows at monthly FelCom meetings and summarize relevant meeting information in the “**The Rep Report**.” If you have any questions or comments for Dr. Ahn, she welcomes your emails at hyowon.ahn@nih.gov.

I do hope to see each of you at this month’s retreats. I know that hours feel short, and timing is tight, but pulling away from your typical activities for the day to meet with colleagues will ultimately allow you to press forward in your research and career investigations. With that said, I’ll see you there!

Your Editor in Chief,
Shana R. Spindler, PhD

*This is a newsletter for NICHD fellows, by NICHD fellows. We want to hear from you! Please send your questions, comments, and ideas to our editor at shana.spindler@nih.gov.*
Former Fellow Follow-Up with Frances Fernando

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**At what point did you decide that you wanted to pursue this career field?**
During my last few months at the NIH, I decided I wanted to approach public health problems from a higher level and to develop strategic responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**You successfully navigated a challenging experience during the pandemic and landed an exciting position. What steps did you take to get there, and what was helpful along the way?**
I conducted many informational interviews in order to hear what public health officials' and practitioners' jobs entailed and their journeys. Informational interviews are a great way to develop a broad-scope understanding of what jobs exist in a field. Don't be afraid of cold-calling, emailing or sending a LinkedIn message!

**What was the application/hiring process at your current company like?**
The hiring process varies at my firm, depending if someone applies through open job positions or if the position is created for them. Luckily, I spoke with a senior manager who saw my potential and was hired within a week.

**How important do you think it is to have scientific publications before applying to a position like this?**
Scientific publications are not necessary but certainly enhance a resume. They are primarily an indicator of capability to drive a project to the final result. Being published shows perseverance in the sometimes-uncertain scientific process and is a testament to high quality work.

**Can you talk about being a Fogarty International fellow while at NICHD and what you did?**
I loved working with Fogarty. During my time at NIH, I was searching for an opportunity to practice my research skills, learn about topical areas in global health, and contribute to a publication. I found all of these at Fogarty and am grateful to the team for taking me in an unprecedented way. I worked on an implementation science scoping review of Fogarty’s Adolescent HIV Implementation Science Alliance for adolescents living with HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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Former Fellow Follow-Up with Frances Fernando
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Where do you currently seek out mentorship?
Currently, I seek mentorship from my manager and senior manager. They help guide my development in the firm and enable me to grow into my interests.

Were there any workshops or programs at NIH that helped you prepare for your current position?
I believe the fellowship was most helpful because of the standard of excellence expected in work quality, and the exposure to NIH researchers and research culture.

Do you have any final tips for fellows who are thinking about pursuing a similar career track?
Finding a job takes time—don’t be discouraged, and keep persevering! Be bold and advocate for yourself. Research the organization well and practice for your case interview!
Meet Your New FelCom Basic Science Rep: Dr. Hyo Won Ahn

I was born and raised in Seoul, South Korea. After graduating with a BS in animal science from Konkuk University, where I gained an interest in basic science research, I moved to the United States and completed an MS degree in physiology of reproduction at Texas A&M University. After graduation, I worked as a research associate in a reproductive genetics lab for several years. I studied transcription factors involved in primary ovarian insufficiency, a disease in which women's ovaries stop functioning prematurely, which often leads to infertility.

To pursue my interest in research further, I joined the Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology at the University of Georgia for my PhD research. During rotation, I was introduced to retrotransposons and became fascinated by their ability to copy themselves and jump to new locations in the host genome. I completed my thesis work in the lab of Dr. David Garfinkel, studying budding yeast retrotransposon Ty1, specifically yeast proteins regulating Ty1 copy numbers in the yeast genome. In 2019, I joined the lab of Dr. Henry Levin (Section on Eukaryotic Transposable Elements) here at NICHD to conduct my postdoctoral research on investigating human transposable elements as causal genetic variants of neuropsychiatric diseases.

I am very excited to serve as the basic science representative for NICHD fellows. I encourage our fellows to participate in the NICHD Fellows Advisory Committee, where your suggestions and voice will be heard! Also, I would love to hear from our fellows. As my career path shows, I have been in many situations where fellows with diverse backgrounds can relate to and understand the problems faced by fellows. Please contact me with any ideas, concerns, or questions. My email is hyowon.ahn@nih.gov.

Our basic science representative is a postdoctoral fellow who serves on the NIH Fellows Committee (FelCom) on behalf of the institute's fellow population. Representative appointments last for 12 months and can be renewed for an additional year.

Responsibilities of the institute's representative include attending all scheduled FelCom meetings, participating on a subcommittee, disseminating information to the fellows in their institute, communicating fellows' concerns to the committee, and coordinating the distribution of information via subcommittees. For NICHD, our representatives also work closely with the Office of Education to plan events for all NICHD postdoctoral trainees.

If you would like more information about serving as a basic science or clinical postdoctoral representative, please contact Dr. Erin Walsh (erin.walsh@nih.gov). For information about serving on a FelCom subcommittee, contact one of the committee chairs directly.
The Rep Report
By Hyo Won Ahn, PhD

As the current NICHD Basic Sciences Institutes and Centers (IC) Representative, I represent NICHD postdoctoral fellows at the NIH Fellows Committee (FelCom) meeting every month and share the latest news with you here. Do you have a concern or question that you want brought up at the next meeting? Contact me at hyowon.ahn@nih.gov.

The August FelCom meeting included a short presentation by Irwin Arias, MD, Senior Scientist Emeritus, NIH. He introduced the Demystifying Medicine Seminar Series, which presents patients, pathology, diagnosis, and therapy in the context of major disease problems and current research. This series is designed to help bridge the gap between advances in biology and their application to major human diseases. He encouraged all postdoc fellows to join the lecture series. All Demystifying Medicine Seminar Series lectures are stored in the NIH VideoCast and can be accessed if live lectures are missed.

Fellows Award for Research Excellence (FARE) co-chairs presented a summary of the FARE2023 statistics and results to the scientific directors (SDs). The SDs agreed to continue the 6th-year extension eligibility for FARE applications. A total of 16 Scientific Interest Groups (SIGs) have accepted to grant additional awards to FARE2023 recipients. The selected FARE2023 awardees will be invited to give a talk at their respective SIG.

Postdoctoral Research Associate Training (PRAT) applications will open on September 3rd! Incoming and early-stage postdocs are encouraged to apply (postdocs who started their postdoc on or after July 1, 2021, are eligible). Applications are due on October 3rd. If you have any questions about the program, please feel free to reach out to PRAT liaison Veronica Ryan (veronica.ryan@nih.gov), or the program director, Edgardo Falcón-Morales (edgardo.falcon@nih.gov).

The Career Development Committee is planning to organize a series of three panels on “Careers in Academia” from September to November. The schedule and further details will be available soon, so stay tuned!

Women Scientists Advisors Committee (WSA) invites you to join the 2022 Anita B. Roberts Lecture, a series that highlights the outstanding research achievements of woman scientists in the NIH Intramural Research Program and honors the role of Dr. Anita Roberts as an exceptional mentor and scientist.

» Speaker: Brigitte Widemann, MD, Senior Investigator and Chief of the Pediatric Oncology Branch, Center for Cancer Research, NCI

» Title: “Advancing the Development of Effective Therapies for Children and Adults with Rare Tumors”

» Date: November 3, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

» Videocast: https://videocast.nih.gov/watch=45832

Did you know that there are several ways to stay informed on postdoc activities and events? You can sign up for the FelCom listserv (Fellow-L) and the Visiting Fellows listserv.
September Announcements

SEPTEMBER 19–23 IS NATIONAL POSTDOC APPRECIATION WEEK
The thirteenth annual National Postdoc Appreciation Week will take place the third week of September this year. To learn more, visit the National Postdoc Association website, and don’t forget to show appreciation for your fellow NICHD postdocs!

DUE THIS MONTH: INTRAMURAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP (IRF)
Funding opportunity for all NICHD fellows

In 2017, DIR launched the Intramural Research Fellowship (IRF), a competitive research funding opportunity for NICHD postdoctoral, visiting, and clinical fellows. Its main objective is to promote grant writing among our intramural trainees, while enhancing awareness of the various components of an NIH grant application.

The IRF submission date is Friday, September 9, 2022.

For more information on the IRF, please visit NICHD Intramural Research Fellowships or email Dr. Erin Walsh (erin.walsh@nih.gov).

DUE NEXT MONTH: PRAT PROGRAM APPLICATIONS DUE OCTOBER 3
Fellows in the NIGMS Postdoctoral Research Associate Training (PRAT) program receive three years of stipend support to conduct independent, mentored research in an NIH intramural laboratory. The PRAT application process is like the F32 Postdoctoral NRSA, and applicants who are already in the NIH intramural program may apply if they began postdoctoral training on or after July 1, 2021, and are a US citizen or permanent resident.

If you plan to apply in this application cycle, please contact Dr. Erin Walsh (erin.walsh@nih.gov) as soon as possible, as your application submission will be through the NICHD Office of Education.

The PRAT program is especially interested in ensuring the applicant pool reflects the diversity of the biomedical PhD talent pool, and strongly encourages applications from scientists in groups underrepresented in the biomedical sciences. For more information about the program, eligibility, and the NIGMS mission, please visit https://www.nigms.nih.gov/training/pages/prat.aspx.

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September Announcements
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NICHD ANNUAL POSTBAC SEMINAR SERIES: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER EXPLORATION

The next cycle of our Annual Postbac Seminar Series begins next month!

Currently there are approximately 100 postbacs conducting clinical and basic science research in our intramural laboratories. During your one or two years of training here at the NICHD, we want you to have an enriched research experience, while at the same time growing more prepared and excited about your chosen career path.

The year’s series will take place (virtually*) on Wednesdays, from 1 to 2 p.m. The intent is to create a comfortable environment within a small group of peers to help postbacs improve their analytical skills as scientists, while expanding their knowledge of biomedical research and its relevance to human health.

This course also focuses on professional development:
» Learning how to present your science
» Exploring different career trajectories
» Meeting physicians and scientists from various clinical or research settings
» Preparing for the medical or graduate school application cycle (including interviews!)

*All sessions will be held via Zoom until NIH guidance permits in-person meetings.

Upcoming sessions (to take place from 1 to 2 p.m. unless otherwise indicated):

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
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<td>October 5</td>
<td>Public Speaking Coach, Scott Morgan</td>
<td>Speaking About Science: Giving Scientific Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 26</td>
<td>Public Speaking Coach, Scott Morgan</td>
<td>Interviewing for Professional School</td>
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Additional sessions will be announced in upcoming newsletter issues, and via email.

If you are interested in joining the class, please email Ms. Katherine Lamb (katherine.lamb@nih.gov) to register and let her know which sessions you plan to attend.

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September Announcements
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SAVE THE DATE! FROM POSTDOC TO FACULTY: SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS TO ACADEMIA
Thursday, October 13, 9–11 a.m.

Are you thinking about a career in academia? Often postdocs spend time crafting their future research program but are not introduced to important steps necessary for the successful transition to academia. Come learn these basics about navigating the academic job search process and important academic interviewing skills. Discover ways to prepare for success in academia once there (grants, mentoring & collaborations) and tips to avoid burnout.

This virtual seminar will be given by Dr. Paula Gregory, Associate Dean for Faculty & Educational Development in the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at the University of North Texas. Please email Ms. Veronica Harker (veronica.harker@nih.gov) if you are planning to join.

NIH UNITE: ENDING STRUCTURAL RACISM (ESR) ACTIVITIES

The NIH UNITE initiative was established to identify and address structural racism within the NIH-supported and the greater scientific community.

The ESR Intranet includes various resources like the Toolkit, Newsletter, FAQs, and other information.

UNITE Milestones and Progress and the Co-Chairs Corner (public ESR webpages) are other avenues to stay informed on UNITE efforts.
September Events

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1–4 PM
NICHD DIR Tenure-Track Investigator Virtual Symposia Series
“The logic and illogic of cell fate decisions”
Hosted by Jeff Farrell, PhD

This series provides tenure-track investigators within NICHD the opportunity to organize a virtual mini-symposium to showcase their area of science to the NICHD DIR and larger NIH intramural community. These symposia are open to all faculty, trainees, and staff at the NIH.


WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 12–2 PM
“How Does Diversity Affect Innovation in Pharma?” Virtual Seminar

The NIH Chief Officer for Scientific Workforce Diversity (COSWD) office will host a virtual event, “How Does Diversity Affect Innovation In Pharma?,” on Wednesday, September 14, from 12 noon–2 pm (seminar: 12–1 pm; tea-time for trainees: 1–2 pm).

The panelists are leaders in pharmaceutical organizations and will discuss how diversity impacts creativity and innovation in pharma. During the tea-time that follows, panelists will share stories from their professional paths, opportune transition points, the importance of a circle of mentors, and options outside of academia.

Registration is now open! Learn more about the seminar at the COSWD blog.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, ALL DAY (VIRTUAL EVENT)
NICHD Intramural Scientific Retreat

We strongly encourage all NICHD intramural researchers, PIs, and lab members, to attend as we celebrate our research achievements and try to spark new ideas and collaborations. There is no registration required to attend the meeting, but anyone who would like to submit a poster online may do so at https://dir.nichd.nih.gov.

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September Events  
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**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1 PM**

**NICHD Postbac Orientation Session**

Our institute has approximately 100 postbacs conducting both clinical and basic science research. The Office of Education would like to bring our postbacs together to meet each other and discuss opportunities for service and leadership, along with the various resources and services available to you at NICHD and NIH-wide.

We aim to enrich fellows’ NIH experience with career development, outreach, and social activities. Learn about:

- NIH Library resources
- The Annual Postbac Seminar Series
- Opportunities for enhancing your science communications skills
- Shadowing opportunities in the NIH Clinical Center
- NICHD Office of Education Services & Resources
- The Office of Intramural Training and Education
- Medical & Graduate School Application Support
- And more!

The NICHD Postbac Orientation Session is **mandatory** for all postbacs who started on or after January 2022, but all NICHD postbacs are welcome. To register, please contact Ms. Katherine Lamb (katherine.lamb@nih.gov).

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, ALL DAY (VIRTUAL EVENT)**

**The 17th Annual Meeting for Postdoctoral, Clinical, Visiting Fellows, Graduate Students, and Postbacs**

*Please register by Friday, September 9*

This meeting will allow you to step away from the lab for a day to network with your NICHD colleagues, participate in a career exploration session, and learn more about the recent developments in our intramural research programs.

This year’s retreat will include:

- Keynote presentation by **Dr. Rosa Puertollano**, Senior Investigator at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.
- Afternoon keynote presentation by industry consultant Lauren Celano of **Propel Careers**.
- Career breakout sessions with professionals from academe, industry, teaching, government administration, science communications, science policy, and grants management.
- You can be a highlight at the retreat too! You will have the option to create a poster for online viewing and present your poster with a three-minute talk. There will also be slots for several fellows to give ten-minute scientific presentations.