

The NICHD Connection

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Interview with Tijana Jovanovic-Talisman: Childbirth and the Academic Job Search

By Silviya Zustiak, PhD



Tijana Jovanovic-Talisman

Tijana Jovanovic-Talisman is a postdoctoral fellow at NICHD, currently transitioning to an academic career as an assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry at University of Hawai'i, Manoa. One thing that distinguishes Tijana's candidacy from people in the same position is that she prepared her academic package and conducted the application process while pregnant with her first child, Fiona, born on October 12, 2010. Consequently, she had to fly all over the country for interviews when her baby was just a few weeks old. I asked her for some tips on success in her unique and delicate situation.

Q: *An academic package includes a teaching statement, a research statement, a cover letter, a CV, and 3 letters of recommendation. Was it difficult putting it all together during pregnancy?*

A: The major difference was that I was constantly sleep-deprived, tired, and generally less able to concentrate. Therefore, I had to prioritize properly, give myself more time, and double-check all important communications. I would really recommend postponing your job search and enjoying your pregnancy if you have a choice.

Q: *Did you get help preparing your package? Are there any resources available at NIH to aid in the process?*

A: Yes, I received a lot of help from friends, colleagues, and mentors on campus. In addition, Brenda Hanning was instrumental in pointing out many resources to me, including the career services on campus. I also watched the webcasts of seminars organized by OITE while staying home with the baby. You should be aware that NIH is rather unique in the commitment to help postdocs with their job search.

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Letter from the Editor

I am quite excited to bring you this month's issue! [Silviya Zustiak interviews Tijana Jovanovic-Talisman](#), an NICHD fellow who recently accepted a tenure-track position at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, about Tijana's job search and interview process with a newborn baby! This is a MUST read for all fellows who start or grow a family during a job search. You might be surprised at the flexibility some universities give to new parents during the interview process.

For anyone who missed this year's annual fellows retreat, we present our first interview with one of the retreat's career panel participants, [Jeanne Fringer](#). Jeanne is a research scientist in the pharmaceutical industry. She offers helpful tips about finding and obtaining an industry job, and she explains what one

might expect in an industry research position.

Finally, Prasanna Satpute-Krishnan gives an informational review of the recent [Postdoc Success Forum](#), a valuable event that covered four types of research settings: liberal arts college, private university, public university, and industry.

Don't forget to check out this year's FARE winners on [page 6](#) and, as always, this month's [announcements](#) and [events!](#)

Your Editor in Chief,
Shana R. Spindler, PhD

Questions, comments, ideas? Please send them to Shana.Spindler@gmail.com.



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Interview with Tijana Jovanovic-Talisman (continued from page 1)

Q: What was the single most important aspect of your application that got you the position at Hawaii?

A: I think it was the fit between what I had to offer and what the department needed. I believe that everybody is unique and you shouldn't be discouraged thinking that you are not as competitive as some of your peers. I think that if an academic position is your dream, you should just try and apply.

Q: You had 7 job interviews all over the country, including Hawaii. Was it difficult travelling for interviews while your baby was just a few weeks old?

A: I first would like to emphasize the fact that all places were very accommodating of my situation. A typical academic interview requires 2-3 days. Because of my baby, my interviews were only a day long. I would usually fly in a couple of hours prior to the interview and catch a late flight back. I was so tired; I mostly slept during the flights. Furthermore, because I was breastfeeding, I requested pump breaks during the day. I felt awkward initially, until I realized that people were very supportive and understanding. Most places also offered to pay for a third person to accompany me if I preferred to take the baby along. However, I preferred to leave the baby at home with my husband and the grandparents, which was less stressful for me. Overall, I really enjoyed the interviews despite constant tiredness.

Q: Do you have any advice about the interview process?

A: It is extremely important to be energetic and excited about science. And, practice your talk! See if you can get an invitation to give a seminar somewhere different than your lab meeting. During the interview, be straightforward about the baby, but still gauge what you can ask. For example, you can ask about day care and working hours, but keep in mind that the more specific questions could be asked once you get an offer.

Q: You got several job offers but you chose Hawaii. Did the fact that you already had a child influence your choice?

A: Absolutely; having a child changes your perspective on life. I chose a family-friendly place in order to balance career and family. I also wanted a city with a slower pace, where I envisioned my daughter growing up—a place where she can play safely outside and still have opportunities to attend dance or music or anything else that she chooses to.

Q: Would you give one last practical advice for other moms and moms-to-be on how to get their dream job?

A: All I can say is that anybody, with the proper mind-set, can do it. Don't give up! And seek any support you can get - from husband, friends, or grandparents. Remember that you don't have to do it alone!

Former Fellow Follow-up with Jeanne Fringer

The NICHD Connection caught up with Jeanne Fringer, NICHD former fellow and one of the career table participants at the Seventh Annual NICHD Fellows Retreat, to ask her a few questions about her particular career track in the pharmaceutical industry:

Q: *What is your current title, and what do you do? What's your typical day like?*

A: My title is Scientist III. I work at US Pharmacopeia (USP) where I develop methods in the laboratory that characterize reference standards for drugs. For example, I recently worked on a bioassay that delivered a potency readout for a particular growth factor. A typical day includes working in the laboratory on assays, working on my laboratory notebook and records, writing reports, and attending meetings. I work 8 hours a day. The hours are flexible around our "core" hours.

Q: *How did you find out about this job?*

A: I found out about this job through a friend of mine at NIH. Her friend was working at USP, and she told me to contact him.

Q: *Please describe the application/hiring process. Did it take a long time?*

A: The hiring process took about two months. After I sent in my application, I was called in for an interview about four

weeks later. I interviewed with my current boss as well as four other members of senior management. After the interview, it took about another three weeks to hear back from them.

Q: *Did you do anything in particular at the NICHD to prepare you for your career transition?*

A: I think that exposure to a lot of different methods and technologies at NICHD helped give me an advantage in the work force.

Q: *Do you have any advice for fellows who are thinking about entering this career field?*

A: I would say to fellows that when applying for jobs in industry they should accentuate every bit of experience that they have, even down to everyday routine methods, such as a protein assay. These are methods that are used a lot in industry and a good understanding of them is valuable.

Q: *Is there anything else you'd like to mention about your career field?*

A: Working in an industry setting is definitely different from academic style research. There is a lot more focus on output and efficiency, as well as documentation and quality assurance. It can be a difficult transition to make, but it is a rewarding experience to be working in a career that is closely tied to public health.

Postdoc Success Forum Recap

By Prasanna Satpute-Krishnan, PhD

On June 21, 2011, NIH fellows who were recently successful in landing jobs in research were kind enough to share their experiences in a candid way during the Postdoc Success Forum. The panel represented three different types of academic positions and one industry position. During the event, the panel participants discussed the application and interview process as well as expectations for someone in their particular careers.

Dr. Julie Belanger recently joined a small liberal arts college with a focus on teaching. To secure this job, she emphasized teaching and mentoring experience in her application, which included a teaching philosophy statement. During her interview talk, she boiled down her experimental work to merely two slides and expanded the background. As a professor at a liberal arts college, she is expected to produce at least one research paper in 5 years while teaching a heavy course load.

Dr. Ram Savan and Dr. Wenge

Zhu recently joined research-intensive state and private universities, respectively. Their applications emphasized publications and research plans. Both Ram and Wenge stressed that the interviews were rigorous and included departmental talks. For the state university, Ram presented a chalk talk, during which potential colleagues assessed his ability to think on his feet, win grants, and contribute to the department's research environment. In Wenge's case, the departmental chair's opinion was dominant in the hiring decision.

Both Ram and Wenge are expected to produce multiple publications, secure money from grants, mentor graduate students, and teach courses. They were both clear that the next challenge is making tenure!

Dr. Tim Chan recently accepted an industry position. His application highlighted his research experience, technical know-how, and, critically, the fact that he understood the biology behind

the company's new technologies. After the application and interview process, the decision to hire him was made quickly.

Although Tim is not expected to write grants, his work must contribute to the bottom-line: make money for the company. He is expected to work in a team and be responsive to changes in research direction made by company leaders

This meeting was organized and moderated by Dr. Howard Young of NCI. As a sidenote, Dr. Young has successfully mentored many postdocs in their job hunts, including panel member Ram Savan. Dr. Young's ability to encourage and prepare his own postdocs to become successful PIs became apparent during this meeting, serving as inspiration for many of the attendees. Brenda Hanning, another remarkable source of support, promoted this session to NICHD postdocs. Finally, every member of the panel recommended OITE as a resource during the job search.



The NICHD “Fellows Award for Research Excellence” Recipients Announced

Since 1995, the Scientific Directors and the Office of Research on Women’s Health have funded the Fellows Award for Research Excellence (FARE), a competition to recognize the noteworthy research completed by intramural fellows. Each winner of the FARE competition receives a \$1000 travel stipend to present his or her work at an upcoming scientific meeting, the chance to display a poster at the FARE awards presentation ceremony, and the opportunity to serve as a judge for the following year’s FARE competition. This year, a notable 22 NICHD fellows have been selected for a FARE award.

Without further ado, the 2012 NICHD FARE recipients and their abstract titles:

- » Anand Banerjee, postdoctoral fellow in the Nossal lab, *Mathematical modeling of clathrin mediated endocytosis*
- » Goutam Chandra, visiting fellow in the Mukherjee lab, *PPT1-deficiency impairs maturation and activity of lysosomal cathepsin D contributing to INCL pathogenesis*
- » Yang Chen, doctoral candidate in the Machner lab, *SidD, a novel deAMPlYase from *L. pneumophila**
- » Samuel Clokie, visiting fellow in the Klein lab, *Discovery of a novel small RNA: piYRNA*
- » Celine Cluzeau, visiting fellow in the Porter lab, *Abnormal gene expression profiles in *Npc1* mutant mouse livers*
- » Natalie Elia, postdoctoral fellow in the Lippincott-Schwartz lab, *Spatial and temporal resolution imaging of the ESCRT machinery in cytokinesis: defining an ordered mechanism in mediating the final cut*
- » Brian Erkkila*, postdoctoral fellow in the McBain lab, *Hippocampal Interneuron Migration and Integration During Development*
- » Rao Fu, doctoral candidate in the Porter lab, *N-Acetyl Cysteine (NAC) Reverses Hepatic Phenotype of an Antisense Oligonucleotide Mouse Model of Niemann Pick Disease, Type C (NPC): Discovery of a Novel Treatment for NPC*
- » Kenta Fujimoto, visiting fellow in the Shi lab, *Transcription of thyroid hormone co-activator PRMT1 is regulated by a thyroid hormone-induced transcription factor c-MYC during *Xenopus* intestinal remodeling*
- » Marko Jovic*, visiting fellow in the Balla lab, *Regulation of PI4KIIa Retrograde Transport*
- » Eun Young Kim, postdoctoral fellow in the Hoffman lab, *Developmental synaptic NMDA receptor remodeling by Kv4.2 potassium channels in vivo.*

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NICHD FARE Recipients

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- » Janesh Kumar*, visiting fellow in the Mayer lab, *Assembly mechanisms of heteromeric glutamate receptor ion channels*
 - » Min Mo, visiting fellow in the Dasso lab, *Distinct roles for Hec1 phosphorylation by Aurora B and Mps1 in controlling chromosome segregation*
 - » Saravana Murthy*, postdoctoral fellow in the Loh lab, *An N-terminal truncated carboxypeptidase E splice isoform induces metastasis by activating nedd9 and other metastasis inducing genes*
 - » Chinmoy Sarkar*, visiting fellow in the Mukherjee lab, *Lysosomal ceroid depletion by a small molecule: Therapeutic implications for an inherited childhood neurodegenerative storage disease*
 - » Christina Schindler, visiting fellow in the Bonifacino lab, *Understanding BLOC-1 function in cargo sorting towards lysosome-related organelles*
 - » Prabuddha Sengupta, visiting fellow in the Lippincott-Schwartz lab, *Nano-scale spatial organization of plasma membrane revealed by pair-correlation analysis*
 - » Madhav Sukumaran, doctoral candidate in the McBain lab, *Structural and biophysical studies of the AMPA receptor N-terminal domain reveals a complex assembly-organizing function and uncovers a new neurological drug target*
 - » Hiroaki Wake, visiting fellow in the Fields lab, *Activity-dependent modulation of myelin formation*
 - » Lauren Waters*, postdoctoral fellow in the Storz lab, *Expanding the Manganese Regulon in Escherichia coli*
 - » Xuefeng Yin, doctoral candidate in the Storz lab, *A small membrane protein that connects two cell signaling pathways in Escherichia coli*
 - » Silviya Zustiak, postdoctoral fellow in the Nossal lab, *Hindered Diffusion in Polymeric Solutions Studied by Fluorescence Correlation Spectroscopy*
- (* Indicates previous winner)

July Announcements

NICHD HAS 22 FARE RECIPIENTS!

Congratulations to all of the FARE (Fellows Award for Research Excellence) winners from NICHD! For a full list of recipients and their abstract titles, see [page 6](#).

THE NICHD SCIENTIFIC VISION SERIES HELD ITS FINAL CONFERENCE

Over the past six months, the NICHD has embarked on a mission to define its next decade of research goals. The identification of broad scientific themes, development of vision workshops, and establishment of highly discussed white papers all came together at the final conference, "NICHD: Bringing the Vision Together," on June 23 and 24, 2011. The conference was live-streamed for all to view, and an archived copy can be found at <http://videocast.nih.gov>. For more information about NICHD's Scientific Vision, please visit <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/vision>.

INTERESTING OPPORTUNITY: 2011 LEADERSHIP SEMINAR IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Applications for the AAAS 2011 Leadership Seminar in Science and Technology Policy are now available. According to the organizers, the event will include "sessions on how policy is made in areas ranging from genetics to energy policy, on federal budgeting for R&D, on how scientists can be effective in interacting with Congress, on science and regulation, and many other topics." Scheduled for November 14-18, this is a great opportunity in the local area to meet leading individuals in science and technology policy. Admittance is on a rolling, space-available basis, and participation is limited to 30-35 people, so don't delay! For more information and to apply to this seminar, please visit <http://events.signup4.com/aaasleadership2011>.

SAVE THE DATE!

Hold the date for Effective Public Speaking, September 2, 9-11 AM. AND on September 15, special guest Dr. William Schrader of NIEHS will present "What Companies Are Looking For," for anyone interested in private-sector jobs.

JOB INTERVIEW SUPPORT

If you have an interview coming up and would like to spend an hour with Scott Morgan, our public speaking coach, to practice your chalk talk and review possible interview questions, arrange a private session with him through Brenda Hanning at hanningb@mail.nih.gov.

DO YOU HAVE AN ANNOUNCEMENT?

Do you have an accomplishment (or know someone with an accomplishment) that you'd like to share with the NICHD community? Did you recently receive a grant, win an award, or have a child? Share your stories and pictures in *The NICHD Connection!* Please email all announcements to Shana.Spindler@gmail.com.

July Events

TUESDAY, JULY 12, 2-3 PM

(Just remember the 2nd Tuesday at 2)
NICHD Fellows Committee meeting
Building 10, CRC atrium, 5th floor, east side
RSVP to Kris Langlais at langlaik@mail.nih.gov

TUESDAY, JULY 19, 2-5 PM

Grant Writing 101
Dr. Sharon Milgram, Director, OITE
Building 50, Room 1227
Register at [https://www.training.nih.gov/events/view/ 2/613/ Grant Writing 101](https://www.training.nih.gov/events/view/2/613/Grant-Writing-101)

WEDNESDAY, JULY 20, 12 PM

NICHD fellows brown bag lunch
At the picnic tables across the hall from the building 31 cafeteria
(Around the patio where the farmer's market is held)
Look for a small sign that says "NICHD brown bag lunch"

THURSDAY, JULY 21, 3-5 PM

Giving an elevator speech
Scott Morgan, public speaking coach
Learn how to network successfully! Scott Morgan will help you describe what you do quickly, clearly, and with excitement—at a poster, at a reception, or traveling from the first to the 17th floor on an elevator! Don't miss this opportunity to learn strategies and develop your own approach to this challenge.
Please register with Brenda Hanning at hanningb@mail.nih.gov
Limited to 25 people