Transition from Fellow to Faculty:
The Top 10 Lessons I have learned
(or wish I had learned)

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With help from my friend and colleague, Sarah Parker, MD
Lessons Learned

1. Find good mentors
2. Ask
3. Interview elsewhere
4. Meet often
5. Collaborate
6. Write, Write, Write
7. Diversify
8. Be Flexible
9. Do what you love – enjoy what you do
10. Don’t forget what is most important
FIND GOOD MENTORS

Types of Mentors:
- clinical
- research
- career/life

Find mentor who will let you take your project with you

Beware of the anti-mentor
What to ask for:

- Protected time
  - Limited clinical duties (but not too little)
  - Limited administrative duties

- Technician
  - Extra hands are your most valuable resource
  - Almost impossible to have a productive basic science project without a technician if you also have clinical responsibilities

- Supplies
- Equipment
- Lab space (?)
- Start up money (?)
- Flexible schedule (?)
Interview Elsewhere: Why?

• Gives you leverage when negotiating
• Helps you realize your own value (prophet without honor in his/her own town)
• Lets you see what else is out there
• Lets you see how things are done elsewhere
• Helps you realize what’s most important to you
• Can lead to collaborations and/or new professional relationships
Meet Often: With Whom?

- Research committee
- Mentors
- Section head
- Department head
- Visiting researchers
- Leaders in your field at national meetings
- Program officer (at least via email/phone)
- With your mentees and technicians

- Be aware of what the criteria for promotions are at your institution
Collaborate

• “Science by mail”
• Hard to survive in isolation
• Can often get more work done faster

• How to find a collaborator
  – Email people whose articles you like with questions
  – Invite people to come by your poster
  – Network at poster sessions
  – Volunteer to give a talk
  – Discuss with mentors

• Word of caution
  – Clearly define roles in collaboration
    • Experimental and reagent expectations
    • Timeline expectations
  – May need to define authorship ahead of time
  – Talk to your colleagues about whether someone is a good/fair collaborator or not before starting
WRITE

• GRANTS
  – As many as possible
  – You can’t get funding if you don’t apply for it
  – Can get some good feedback

• PAPERS
  – Publishing helps you to get grants and get promoted [academic currency]
  – Think about “least publishable units” – think about your abstract and figures before you start the research (i.e. what do I want/need for this paper)
  – If wait until you have the whole entire story, can get scooped
  – This is why you are doing what you are doing – share your discoveries
WRITE: GRANTS

• External
  – NIH: K awards
    • Person, project, mentor, institutional commitment
  – PIDS and IDSA
  – Disease specific foundations
  – Young/New Investigator

• Internal – utilize the resources at your own institution
  – TCH Research Institute
  – Colorado Clinical Translational Science Institute (CCTSI)
  – Bridge grants
Useful Info

Diversify

• Have more than one research project
• Consider how your research is translational (use your MD to your advantage – important for funding)
• Acquiring other ID skills may be unexpectedly useful in the future
  – infection control, epidemiology, public health, clinical microbiology, clinical research, teaching, etc.
• **BUT:** don’t diversify too much – if pulled in too many directions, won’t get anything done
Be Flexible

- Embrace - don’t ignore - unexpected opportunities (even if they don’t fit into exactly what you are doing)
- Go where the research leads you
- Don’t ignore unexpected research results or surprisingly negative results
- Know when to stop
- Whatever you do, think of it as a research opportunity
Why I Love My Job

• Tremendous variety
• I learn something new every day
• Joy and excitement of discovery
• Ability to mentor and be challenged by creative and thoughtful students, residents, and fellows
• My colleagues
• Flexible schedule
• Ability to make a difference in children’s lives - in individuals, in the community, and globally
What if it isn’t working?

Talk to your mentors

Come up with a differential diagnosis of why you are unhappy – try to dissect out the causes [is it me or is it the institution?]

Address the issues/make changes

What if you are unhappy?

Try something new

Look elsewhere
#10: DON’T FORGET WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU
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