



Mount Sinai Outline

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Alternative Science Careers: an interview with Patrick Hong, Ph.D.

By Rewatee Gokhale

Dr. Patrick Hong is a former Mount Sinai Postdoc from Department of Microbiology. He received his PhD in Microbiology, Immunology and Molecular Genetics from the University of California, Los Angeles. After his PhD, he completed a postdoctoral fellowship at UCLA working on developing a humanized mouse model to study the cellular and molecular basis of inflammatory diseases of the immune system such as systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE). He then moved to ISMMS, where he was a senior postdoc in **Dr. Benhur Lee's** lab working on using viruses for therapeutic strategies before joining **Regeneron Pharmaceuticals** in his current role as staff scientist in December 2017. Regeneron Pharmaceuticals is a leading biotechnology company with ~6000 employees based in Tarrytown, NY.

I spoke recently with Dr. Hong to discuss his current position and his journey to get there.

Can you give us a brief (2-3 sentence) description of your current position?

Regeneron makes antibodies against potential therapeutic targets to cure diseases such as cancer, infectious disease, or some rare diseases. My group develops bioassays to test and screen antibodies against therapeutic targets in cancer. My job is to design and validate the assays against our therapeutic targets of interest

How many years of postdoc, or other work experience, did you have before your current job?

I had 8 years of postdoc experience combining Mount Sinai and UCLA after graduate school

What did you learn during your PhD/postdoc that is most helpful to you in your current position?

During my postdoc at Mount Sinai, I also had a secondary role as a lab manager. Managing experience is highly valued at Regeneron.

What was the most important event or factor that contributed to your transition into an alternative career outside academia?

Networking is probably a key to make any transition out of academia. Hearing people's experience helped and guided



Patrick Hong, Ph.D.

me to decide what I really want to have as a career objective.

What, if anything, do you miss about being a postdoc?

I do miss having flexibility in life. In the industry, it would be difficult to make progress in your project at your own time/pace (i.e. work hours, etc) since you would mostly be working in a team environment.

What do you wish you had known before accepting your current position? Alternatively, what advice do you have for current postdocs looking transition into staff scientists in the industry?

Nothing really. I was able to get all the information I needed for my current position via networking with another scientist in the group who eventually became my colleague.

Approximately how many hours do you work per week?

I work about 40-45 hours a week, with about 10 hours a week on average in meetings.

How frequently do you work in the evenings and/or on the weekends?

So far, I have not really worked after I go home. My colleagues may work 3-4 hours if they are busy that week, but that's not something that happens on regular basis.

On a scale of 1-10 (1=low, 10=high), how much autonomy do you have in your current position? What are the restrictions, if any?

8. So far, I have not encountered any major restrictions, but I'm sure there are some that I don't know about.

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Does your position require that you travel? If/when you travel, how long is your trip?

All scientists are required to go to at least one conference a year. This year I am planning to go to two conferences/workshops.

Do you work with other people and/or in a team?

Almost everyone at Regeneron works in a team environment. In my group, a manager oversees the entire projects where I am responsible for my team projects.

What is the average salary range for your position?

For my position, the salary ranges between 110K – 140K

Please answer the questions below for details about PhD/ Postdoc training for this job:

Is a PhD necessary to apply for this type of position?

Yes.

Is it valued to have a PhD in your current position?

Yes.

Is previous postdoc experience valued to apply for this type of position? Is it required? If so, how many years?

Valued, but not required. There are no set years.

Did your PhD/postdoc research focus matter to get this position?

No, I was trained virologist, but now I am doing cancer research.

Was your publication record important towards getting this position?

Yes and No, it really depends on the person you meet for the interview. I met 8 people on my interview.

What does a typical day at work look like for you?

Meetings, experiments, more meetings, and a lot more reading.

Firing up Neurons at the 2018 Sinai Brain Fair

By Bhavita Walia

Mount Sinai's **6th Annual Brain Awareness Fair** was held on Tuesday, March 13, 2018 as a part of the **Brain Awareness Week (BAW)**¹. BAW is the brainchild (pun totally intended) of the **Dana Foundation**² and was started with the goal of increasing public awareness of the brain as well as the progress and benefits of brain research. At Mount Sinai, the Brain Fair is organized by **Mentoring in Neuroscience Discovery at Sinai (MiNDS)**³, with support from the **Friedman Brain Institute** and the **Center for Excellence in Youth Education (CEYE)**⁴ with the help of volunteers. The 2018 Brain Fair was a huge success drawing over 500 participants across the age spectrum.

The Guggenheim Atrium was bustling with school children from local schools, their parents and members of the public as they all tried their hand at the various booths that had been set up with engaging and interactive exercises to teach the public about brain function. School students were given passports on which they could collect stamps and stickers after completing the activities at different booths, some of which included making a neuron out of pipe cleaners, learning how the senses of taste and smell are connected (using jelly beans!) and demystifying brain myths.

The *Build-a-Brain* booth was a very busy and popular stop as nearly every child was walking around the lobby with a colorful brain hat on. *Dizzy Izzy* was a fun way to understand how the vestibular system works by having participants run 10 times around a baseball bat and then try to walk in a straight line.

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Photos by Alyson Mehr (CEYE)

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One of the parents commented on how the children were able to recover their ability to taste a lot faster compared to them after trying the PTC strips at the *Taste Test* booth. Students were also fascinated by the *Human-Human Interface* booth when they learned that their friend's action potential could be transferred to them through electrodes stuck on their arm. The *Optical Illusions* booth was another popular stop for participants from young kids to grandparents who were challenged with figuring out whether the image they saw was real or an illusion. It was entertaining to see the children get things right while the parents sometimes guessed it wrong. An older member of the public found it reassuring that she was able to get them all right and remarked "Well, I guess that means everything is still working!" Kids and adults alike tested out their bean bag tossing skills when challenged with prism goggles at the *Hand-Eye Coordination* booth where they were required to throw the bean bags at an X on the ground, first with their naked eyes, and then with prism goggles on which distorted their vision towards the left. After realizing that they were being tricked by the goggles

into thinking the X was on the left, a number of people were able to correct for the distortion with the goggles on and throw the bag at the right location.

Other activities that were organized as a part of BAW by Mount Sinai's Friedman Brain Institute are *Art of the Brain*, an exhibition which showcases artwork like photographs, illustrations and sculptures of the brain, and, *Studying the Brain*, a storytelling event where personal stories of brain research are shared with the audience.

The event was also covered by local news outlet CBS New York⁵. All of these fun and interactive activities were geared towards explaining the functions of the brain to the participants and given the huge attendance and excitement at the event, it's safe to say that the 6th Annual Brain Awareness Fair met and exceeded its goals.

1 <http://icahn.mssm.edu/research/friedman/events/brain-awareness-week/>

2 <http://www.dana.org/BAW/>

3 <https://webcommons.mssm.edu/minds/>

4 <http://icahn.mssm.edu/about/diversity/ceye/>

5 <http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2018/03/13/brain-awareness-fair/>

Co-chair Corner

By Letizia Amadori

Greetings Fellow Postdocs,

I hope "spring" has been treating you well despite the funny weather!

This is my first "Co-Chair Corner", since I recently started my mandate as PEC co-chair. I feel really honored to have the chance to serve the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Postdoc community, by leading the great group of people that are part of the **Postdoctoral Executive Committee** (PEC). I will put all my strength in fighting for our rights to improve Sinai postdoc's life.

We spent the last month redefining our annual goals for 2018 for the co-chairs leadership and for the Advocacy, Community and Professional Development working groups. We are more motivated and excited than ever: from increasing the number of meet-ups and promoting charity events and drives, to corroborating our connections with the career offices at ISMMS in order to organize career symposiums and workshops for postdocs, we have plenty of new activities to do! Moreover, we are advocating for more resources, benefits and paid leave, and also taking a look at how our NYC neighbor institutions are doing!

On May 18th, our Science Policy group, in collaboration with the Women in Science (WiSM) organization, will hold a half-day Career Development event. Don't miss out the flyers that will be everywhere in your floor/building and take note of time and location!

For all these reasons, we're always looking for motivated postdocs to join the Postdoc Executive Committee! If you are interested in joining our team, come to one of our **monthly meetings** to get more information. PEC meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at noon in the Hess Building room 10-101. The next one will be on May 8th!

Our **monthly social** event will be held on April 27th in at Icahn Building, MC level, 5:30pm-7:30pm. On May 3rd, 2-4 pm, we also have a **postdoc meet-n-greet** sponsored by Mt. Sinai International Personnel division at the Hatch auditorium lobby.

Hope to see many of you soon.

Sincerely,

Letizia

Letizia Amadori and Agata Kurowski are your PEC co-chairs.



Website: <http://icahn.mssm.edu/education/postdoctoral-training>

Twitter: [@MtSinaiPostdocs](https://twitter.com/MtSinaiPostdocs)

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Trainee Mistreatment Resource Panel: <http://webcommons.mssm.edu/mistreatmentresourcepanel/>

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