

Autumn Newsletter of the PostDoc Network (PDN)

Editorial

This year we had lots of interesting activities. Especially the PDN Career Seminar series became a successful regular event thanks to your participation – We thank you for your support!

The PDN also took a first step towards social networks this summer and launched its facebook site. There, all activities of the PDN and PostDoc-relevant information are posted to keep you up to date.

In addition, the first DKFZ PostDoc Network Retreat is approaching. At the end of November, 40 PostDocs of DKFZ, ZMBH, Heidelberg University and EMBL will spend two days in Bruchsal. The foreseen program includes: scientific discussions, exchange with the

invited speaker and social networking. For the development of these different activities on a regular basis, we are seeking for new PostDocs to join the PDN Committee. Be part of the PDN Committee to develop your organization skills, to meet people working there, and to enrich the everyday life of the DKFZ PostDocs. Together, we can make being a PostDoc at the DKFZ really exciting, on both scientific and social levels.

The PDN Committee

Highlights

I joined the PDN Committee – and I like it a lot

About a year ago, I met two members of the PDN Committee in an advanced training course. They told me a bit about how the PDN was formed to bring DKFZ PostDocs together, and how everyone can benefit from this evolving network. This idea got stuck in my head, and in the following weeks I kept asking myself how it comes that I know hardly any PostDocs at DKFZ apart from the ones in my group. So I decided to join the next PDN meeting to see what this is about. Since then, I am an active member of the PDN, and I have to say that I learned a lot and it is really great fun. We all kind of know how to work in or organize a team, but it is really a big difference when it comes to organizing meetings, seminars, or an entire retreat. Or even, to write concepts and to ask for funding for ideas that are not scientific, but aimed at bringing people together. Actively participating in the PDN has **improved my communication skills and my negotiation abilities**. I am sure that this is helpful for my daily routine, as well as for my further career plans. So, if you would like to join a group of great people, have fun and learn a lot of 'extra' skills, come and join the next meeting. Just contact us! – I bet you will like it too.

Christina Laufer

The PDN on Facebook

One of the problems the PDN committee faces every day is how to transmit PostDocs-relevant information to DKFZ PostDocs. To reach even more people, we decided to use the World Wide Web ... and you can find us on Facebook. Check out our site [PDN@DKFZ!](https://www.facebook.com/PDN@DKFZ) Here, we post interesting information for PostDocs in general, as well as information regarding the events organized by the PDN.

Over 38 fans and a large number of non-fans frequently access our posts on Facebook. We had over 1.900 hits on our posts in the last month. This makes the first month of our presence on Facebook a great success.

Please, show your support for the PDN by clicking the "I like" button on our site and to get all the latest news from the PDN.



Job offer at the PDN Committee!!!

We are looking for highly interested PostDocs to take care of the next newsletters. It will be possible to interact with the DKFZ Press Office to improve this powerful communication tool. Your benefits as the PDN newsletter editors: Visibility, teamwork, experience in project and scientific management, personal contacts and networking, self-confidence and more. If you are interested, please contact us as soon as possible via email at postdoc-network@dkfz.de.



Past events

3rd Career Seminar

In the third career seminar, Dr. Peter Nickel, consultant at 3Con Management Consultants GmbH, presented his personal career path. First, he gave an overview of how he started as a wet lab scientist, then became a project manager, and is now working as a consultant. Repeatedly, he pointed out that **additional training courses besides the daily scientific work were very helpful** for his further career steps. In addition, his active participation in BioContact e.V. (an organization founded by DKFZ PhD students) gave him some practical experience on how to organize and manage projects, on team work, discussions and networking. From his personal perspective, training courses with non-scientific focus can help to start a career as project manager or consultant. Nevertheless, everybody who starts to work in this business will also receive specific trainings needed for daily job-related responsibilities from the company. Dr. Nickel also pointed out that **networking and keeping alive contacts with many people is extremely helpful** in the current business world. A very good example for this is how Dr. Nickel received the job opportunity at 3Con Management Consultants. On a networking platform, he got to know via a former colleague, that 3Con was hiring new people. After a regular application process he was finally hired as consultant. Besides this, having a PhD degree is very helpful in several business fields, because the title functions like a door opener and allows getting easily in contact with the important persons in companies.

Dr. Nickel started his career outside academia as project manager at BIOPRO Baden-Württemberg. There, he learned how to connect people from different working areas like science and business, always aiming to create a win-win situation for both sides. To fulfil the work of a project manager in life

science, a basic knowledge in economics together with the solid scientific base is very important.

About the work as a consultant, Dr. Nickel explained that keeping a good work-life balance is rather difficult, because the work location changes from project to project, which often implies a lot of travelling between family and clients. Additionally, he mentioned, that age is not an important hiring criterion for consulting companies. However, due to the travelling, mainly younger people work as consultants. Finally, Dr. Nickel pointed out that working as consultant is an excellent step stone with a high chance to get a permanent management position in a company later on, since a consultant will make many direct contacts in companies that were clients before.

We, the PDN, thank Dr. Nickel for his interesting presentation. Many thanks go also to all participants, for their interest and the fruitful discussion after the seminar.

"Career Plan B – How and where to search for a job on the hidden job market"

This DKFZ advanced training course, initiated and organized by Dr. Barbara Janssens, PhD Career Manager at the DKFZ, was offered for the first time in July 2011. It is supposed to help us finding the right job without the effort of digging through job advertisements (only one third of all job openings are filled via applications to advertised positions anyway).

First, the trainer of the course, Manfred Fock, focused on the question: which job really suits me? This touches two aspects: the institution's culture and mission, as well as our own strengths and interests. He introduced us to several alternative forms of skill identification to identify our dream job, as mind maps for things we have enjoyed most. (More ideas

about this can be found in the book: "What color is your parachute?" (Richard N. Bolles) which is also in Barbara's office, for anyone who is interested.

Then, we learned how to find the non-advertised, hidden jobs. This is by **building a network**. It could be as simple as: If you come across a topic which is of interest to you, **contact someone** who you assume to be involved (as an "expert" in the field) **with 2 or 3 informative questions**, and politely **ask for further contacts**. In doing so, you learn about this and maybe related topics and possible roles in this field. Always ask for information. Never ask for a job – the job will ask you! Don't forget to **send a thank-you-card** if someone was of real help. This will also spread your contact details. As the concept is not trivial to implement, a follow-up Workshop will take place in November (contact **Dr. Barbara Janssens** for more information).

In summary, a very valuable day which was on top of all really enjoyable even though sensitive topics were touched – thanks to the outgoing and optimistic attitude of Manfred Fock.

Lunch with a Distinguished Lecturer

After a highly interesting and inspiring scientific presentation entitled "Melanoma metastasis – Genetics, Epigenetics and Tumor microenvironment interactions", which made us, inter alia, reconsider the definition of such a general term as "metastasis", some PostDocs and students had a free discussion with Danny Welch during lunch. Besides scientific advice, he answered our questions about his own experience in industry and academia, as well as his views on the possible carrier pathways for PostDocs.

Danny Welch joined a big industrial company after his PhD because of the "high salaries". After the division he had worked in was closed, he changed the company, but he definitely was not happy in industry. He decided then to come back to the academia, where he made a brilliant carrier.

For us, he had a very important experience that shows that a scientist can indeed return back after few years outside the academia and successfully "re-start" the scientific carrier.

What did he learn from his experience in industry? "**Professionalism**". The great pressure in the industry teaches you to really work hard during the working time. Even the use of adapted clothes, like wearing a suit, was helpful to him. To professionalism belongs as well not listening to music with earphones during work, something he considers acting against open communication and is strongly forbidden in his lab!

"Would it be better, after the PhD, to join a big suc-

cessful group with excellent publication records or a smaller research group working on a topic one is really interested in?" To this question, he said that to be successful, **one should do, what one likes**. On a long run it brings you more. Important is to learn new techniques during the first years, read a lot and look for a possible research gap in the field you are interested in. **Find your own scientific niche!**

When is the right time for a PostDoc to become an independent group leader?" He said (smiling) "When is the right time to leave Papa and Mama's home?" It depends on the person but be careful, do not be too comfortable! It could then be too late. Some people just love the work in the lab, then they have to look for a possibility to do so and do not need to establish an own group. When you are ready to supervise other people who will carry out your ideas, this is your time!

For PostDocs planning to start their own lab, he had interesting advice. First, give your first technician and PhD student a project you are sure it will work. This will keep the motivation at the highest level. Second, follow the "KISS rule: **Keep It Simple Stupid**" for project development and experiment design. Third, get advices on grant writing from your PIs! And finally, **keep your integrity and honesty**.

Take the opportunity to have lunch with the next Distinguished Lecturer on October 26th. Register by sending an email at **s.grenner@dkfz.de** or **m.caudron@dkfz.de**.

ZMBH PostDocs Science club

The ZMBH Postdoc Science club is an initiative of our colleagues from ZMBH. The idea is to meet regularly to **discuss and interchange opinions about different topics in a pleasant and relaxing atmosphere**. Since June, Postdocs from the BioQuant and the DKFZ are warmly welcome to take part and present their own work or other topics of general interest. Since then, members of PDN Committee have attended this interesting meeting and also presented the PDN activities in a very informal format. We could also enjoy the great aperitif during presentation and discussion round. We had a lot of fun and we definitively encourage you to join this enriching event. It is certainly an excellent opportunity to make contact and interact with other PostDocs and to broaden our knowledge about other fields, which are not closely related to our own research projects.

The ZMBH PostDocs Science Club is taking place on a regular basis, **every second Wednesday at 5.15 pm in the seminar room of the top floor of the ZMBH building**. We will communicate via email the date of the next meeting.

Important up-coming events

Yearly Questionnaire

The PostDocs community is probably the one presenting the **highest turnover**. For this reason, we decided to run a **survey on a yearly basis**. We are now about to launch this year's questionnaire for PostDocs. The main focus is **to characterize the actual PostDocs community of the DKFZ and its needs**. When planning the questionnaire, we realized that even within the PDN Committee, PostDoc situations are quite different in many aspects. Therefore, it would be very helpful that as many PostDocs as possible take part in this survey so that the PDN, in return, can adapt its activities to the actual demand.

Career Seminar

The next Career Seminar will be the **"Bayer HealthCare Career Seminar"** scheduled on **Friday, December 2nd from 1 to 2.30 pm in K1/K2**. This event is the result of the successful collaboration between Frau Wellenreuther (project coordination, DKFZ-Bayer Healthcare Alliance), Frau Janssens (PhD Career Manager) and the PDN. The speakers will be Dr. Cora Mund und Dr. Sven Christian, both former PostDocs of the DKFZ. You are all warmly invited to attend this seminar. There will be plenty of time for questions during and after the seminar. We are looking forward to seeing you there.

Get-Together

This summer, we started to establish a **PostDoc Get-Together** to improve the exchange and networking between DKFZ PostDocs. We are all spread out over many departments and buildings, and especially new people often only know the members of their own group or the people who work next-door. We think that it would be great to get as many PostDocs as possible together every second Tuesday of the month, so that people get the chance to meet on a relaxed and informal basis. This will help us to make the PDN an active network where we can exchange all kinds of information about science, career planning, life in Heidelberg, and so on.

Next time, we will meet on **November 8th at Bellini** (Das Bistro) in Neuenheimer Feld at **6:30 pm**.

PostDoc Retreat

The idea to organize a PostDoc Retreat arose after the PDN Kick-Off Meeting earlier this year. During the summer, the Retreat Organizing Team found the location for the PostDoc Network Retreat at the **Naturfreundehaus Bruchsal for November 25th and 26th, 2011**. The aim of this retreat is to bring PostDocs from different research areas and institutes together for scientific exchange as well for some informal social networking in a relaxed atmosphere. In addition, we invited **Dr. Gary Davidson, actually group leader at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) and former PostDoc of the DKFZ**. In his talk and in the following discussion, he will give helpful advice on **how to build up one's own lab** and tell us what to consider when planning becoming an independent scientist. We will also have **poster and talk sessions** where we will not only learn more about the research by PostDocs, but also give each other **valuable feedback on quality and style of the presentations**. Registration is now closed and we are all very much looking forward to this **first scientific and social networking event for PostDocs**.

**If you want to see your ideas
put into action: join us!**



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