

FC708 Professional Development Skills

Panel discussion: A variety of biomedical careers

April 27, 2022

Boston University's Broadening Experiences in Scientific Training (BU's BEST) brought together three Ph.D. alumni with rewarding careers that span a wide range of career specialties. The panelists included **Dr. Justin Berry** (GMS'16), U.S. SMA Customer & Market Insights, Biogen; **Dr. Amanda Bolgioni-Smith** (GMS'18), ESPRIT R&D Associate, Global Medical Affairs, Oncology, Early Strategy & Innovation, GSK; and **Dr. Kadryn Kadasia** (GMS'18), Senior Scientist, Vaccine Development, Particles for Humanity, PBC. **Dr. Barbara Schreiber** (GRS'81), Associate Professor of Biochemistry hosted the discussion.

All early in their careers, the panelists have already experienced interesting career paths. Dr. Berry was formerly a Postdoctoral Scientist for Biogen, then accepted a Consultant role at ClearView Healthcare Partners, until he accepted his current position as Sr. Manager, Customer & Market Insights back at Biogen where he works on product commercialization and life-cycle management. Leveraging his translational science background, he focuses on translating science into a return on investment for future development, ensuring that patients and physicians have all the information they need to make informed treatment decisions. Dr. Bolgioni-Smith completed an internship with BU's BEST while earning a Pharmacology Ph.D. Upon completing her Ph.D., she took on an administrative role as a post-doctoral associate for BU's BEST, then was promoted to Director of Professional and Career Development faculty and to Assistant Professor, Medical Sciences & Education. She remained in academia (at BU) for her next position as Associate Director for Program Evaluation for the Clinical and Translational Science Institute. Dr. Bolgioni-Smith then moved into industry working for GSK as an Esprit R&D Associate in Global Medical Affairs Oncology, bringing patients and healthcare providers together during clinical trials, and she recently started her second year Esprit R&D Associate rotation in US Medical Affairs as Scientific Director. Dr. Kadasia started as an Associate Scientist, Post-doctoral Fellow at Merck before taking on her current role as Senior Scientist in Vaccine Development for Particles for Humanity, PBC; her passion is working on technologies that aim to achieve vaccine equity for low- and middle-income countries. Dr. Kadasia was inspired to merge her scientific endeavors in the pharmaceutical industry with her passion for innovations towards improved global public health. What is evident by the array of the panelists' careers is that biomedical Ph.D. scientists are not limited – their ability to thrive in multiple positions is endless.

The panelists gave some great recommendations regarding the skills needed for a successful career. The consensus was focused around building technical skills as well as broader "soft" skills. It's important to understand field-specific skills, but many of these can be learned on the job if the candidate portrays a willingness to learn. Concurrently, candidates should focus time on building broad, transferable skills such as communication, presentation, relationship-building and interviewing skills. In Dr. Bolgioni-Smith's role, she builds relationships with a broad range of people globally, both internal

to the company and external to the company, including patients, scientists, and healthcare professionals. Likewise, Dr. Berry conducts hypothesis-driven market research, relying on interviews and surveys to gain critical insights for future efforts. The panelists encouraged mastering skills that can be translated across fields.

Dr. Berry and Dr. Bolgioni-Smith do not have roles in hiring but they expressed the importance of finding a company culture that matches the candidate's personality. In hiring personnel, Dr. Kadasia also expressed the importance of matching personality to work culture. She recommended candidates take personality tests and reflect on who they are and what they can bring to the culture of that work environment. The last key piece of advice was to utilize connections. This goes hand-in-hand with networking. These connections can offer feedback, expertise, as well as job opportunities. Building connections and maintaining those relationships will help to bring success as students progress through their Ph.D. training and beyond.

When it comes to work/life balance, Dr. Kadasia revealed that she actively searches for activities she enjoys besides work, such as gardening. Dr. Bolgioni-Smith said her work/life balance throughout life will change depending on life's priorities. Dr. Berry reminded the trainees that they're "in the driver's seat" when it comes to career decisions so they should fearlessly reconsider if they realize that the path they've taken isn't working for them.

The biomedical career panel gave a new perspective on career options. Not all careers fit a certain mold and scientists can carve their own paths to suit their interests. From an introduction to their successful careers to interview prep, the panelists offered an inspiring discussion for Ph.D. students to explore their own passions. A big thank you to the panelists for their insights as well as BU's BEST for hosting the biomedical career panel.

All of the panelists have graciously agreed to distribution of their emails so trainees can follow up with them. Dr. Berry (justin.berry@biogen.com), Dr. Bolgioni-Smith (abolgioni@gmail.com) and Dr. Kadasia (kkadasia@outlook.com). Please mention this article when you reach out.

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