Fellowships opportunities: Finding Your Funding
by Alexis Caulier

Obtaining funding is crucial to sustain research programs, and most of researchers will have to apply for grants. Here are some tips from the Boston Children’s Hospital’s (BCH) Office of Fellowships Training to become familiar with grant opportunities.

- **What is a fellowship?** Fellowships are funding opportunities to provide postdoctoral research training to individuals to broaden their scientific background and extend their potential for research in specified health-related areas. There are many different types of fellowships/grants, from public grants provided by the American National Health Institute (NIH) to those provided by private foundations that are usually more flexible. Most NIH grants for postdoctoral fellows require the applicant to have a green card or be a citizen, such as NIH T32 or F32 or K awards. The K99/R00 Pathway to independence grant is the exception and is open to international scholars (see [https://grants.nih.gov/grants/who-is-eligible.htm](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/who-is-eligible.htm) for more information). Some grant applications are also specifically dedicated to non-US citizen doing research in the US, but they might require specific visa status and might not apply to H1 or O visa holders.

- **How much is a fellowship?** It is highly variable, but most of them only cover salary, and do not provide any funding for supplies or equipment. Importantly, fellowships at BCH must meet the NIH minimal salary requirement policy. If the funding is lower, the PI or the department has to supplement the fellow’s income to reach the minimal NIH requirements. Of note, this is a minimum required but research fellows have the possibility to negotiate an increased income with their department based on the amount of funding they received.

- **Why fellowships are important?** Building your career development is important for aspiring academic researchers. As funding is critical to start and run a research program, young researchers are expected to raise funds to sustain their own research. Currently, BCH has approximately 75 active fellowships. Receiving funding is a major step in proving your ability to support your research, before applying to any academic position. Research fellows who receive fellowships are more likely to obtain academic positions in this extremely competitive environment.

Even if academics is not in your future, writing grants applications is a relevant
way to increase your ability to communicate science effectively. Moreover, it is an effective way to learn how to sell yourself and your research.

- **Talking about money, what is important to know?** The main difference between all the grants lies in the way they get paid. Some grants are directly paid to BCH following a specific agreement, whereas some of them are paid directly to the applicant. When the fellowship is paid directly to the applicant, the applicant’s status will change to AP Research Fellow and there will be no income taxes collected by BCH. Thus, applicants are responsible for declaring their income to the IRS and to pay taxes every quarter. **As BCH does not collect taxes, applicants cannot be eligible for pre-tax benefits,** as healthcare insurance, child daycare FSA, Healthcare FSA, or parental leave. Applicants are not eligible to other benefits either, discounted gym access, or retirement plans sponsored by BCH. They are responsible to subscribe to their own retirement plans if they want so.

- **Health insurance programs and benefits?** If the fellowship is paid through BCH, the applicant remains eligible for all pre-tax benefits. If not, but if the department supplements the income, the applicant might be eligible to some of the benefits depending on the supplemented rate. If the Research Fellow receives 50% or more of their funding through the Hospital, they are eligible for pre-tax benefits (including medical, dental, vision, life and disability benefits). If greater than 50% of a Research Fellow’s funding is through an NRSA grant (T32 or F32), the Research Fellow may enroll in a core menu of benefits (medical, dental, vision, life insurance and disability) on a direct bill basis at subsidized rates. If greater than 50% of their funding is through another external funding agency, the Research Fellow is not eligible for benefits and is responsible for subscribing to their own health but must obtain acceptable health insurance through their funding agency or department. In the case of a parenting leave, certain Research Fellows are eligible for 8-weeks of paid leave. For additional information, please go to the Research Fellows Policy Manual, HR Resources for Research, Benefits or Leave of Absence sections of the BCH Human Resources Intranet site.

- **Where to find the information about fellowships?** There are multiple ways to find available funding opportunities, and their requirements. Most of the departments have internal websites or newsletters, and some have dedicated staff. BCH’s Office of Sponsored Programs also provides details on the intranet Information is also available on the funding agencies’ websites, such as NIH (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/oer.htm for NIH funding or https://www.fic.nih.gov/Funding/NonNIH?type=postdoctoral for non-NIH funding). Automatic e-mail alerts from funding agencies, such as community of science (https://www.communityscience.com/enews.php) can also be helpful to stay updated on the available opportunities. The Office of Fellowship Training also offers workshops and seminars to help the post-doctoral fellows find funding and prepare their grant applications. Please contact Lu-Ann Pozzi for more information (Lu-Ann.Pozzi@childrens.harvard.edu).

- **How to apply?** Every fellowship application is different, and most of them must be completed online. Be careful, some of the funding opportunities are limited in number, and the department must pre-select the applications. Please talk to your PI and your department before applying to one of those.

- **Contact the right people!** Please talk to Lu-Ann Pozzi from the Office of Fellowships Training (Lu-Ann.Pozzi@childrens.harvard.edu) to increase your chances of success in fellowship applications.

The PDA deeply thanks Dr. Lu-Ann Pozzi from the Office of Fellowships Training, Kathy Williams, Sheila Delahanty and Roger Wellington from the Human Resources, and Theresa Applegate from the Office of Sponsored Programs for providing essential information.
Spotlight on the new PDA co-president

Get to know our new co-president of the Boston Children's Postdoc Association, Daniëlle Peterse! Since November 2021, she took over the position along side Sreya Ghosh to lead the BCH Postdoc Association, but who is Daniëlle?

Can you give us a little background about yourself, your lab, your work?
DP: Of course! I was born and raised in the Netherlands. After finishing my master’s degree in Pharmaceutical Sciences, I moved to Leuven (Belgium) for my PhD on animal models for endometriosis. In 2018, I started my postdoc here at Boston Children’s Hospital in the Vascular Biology Program where I’m working on understanding the pathogenesis of endometriosis.

What was your involvement in the PDA before being elected co-President?
DP: I have been a member of the Networking and Outreach committee since October 2020, and I was involved as volunteer for the science carnival and the Christmas party since I arrived at BCH in 2018. I am really hoping that we will be able to organize these exciting events sometime soon again.

What is your main goal as president of the BCH PDA, where do you really want to make an impact for postdocs?
DP: I have several goals as president of the PDA. First of all, I would like to tailor some of our events more towards our clinical fellows. Next, I think that it is very important that every postdoc has access to the benefits offered by BCH, independent on how their salaries are paid and I will work with our leadership to see if we can change the current regulations. Lastly, every survey shows that many postdocs have difficulties to make ends meet, I will bring that to the attention of BCH leadership and work towards adding benefits for postdocs.

What are you already super happy with, that has changed for postdocs thanks to the PDA?
DP: I have a 2-year-old son, and I was very happy that the PDA had advocated for paid maternity leave for postdocs and for increased availability of lactation rooms. Thanks to the PDA, I was able to enjoy the first few months at home and get used to life as a new parent. Thanks!

Which is your favorite BCH PDA event?
DP: This is a difficult question, the PDA has so many wonderful events! I love socializing and talking to other postdocs at the events organized by the Networking and Outreach committee. I also find it very inspiring to hear from people who were postdocs once and who have moved on to other positions during the events organized by the mentoring and career development committees. I think that the PDA organizes a ton of great events throughout the year, and I have loved every event that I attended.

What is your favorite thing to do in Boston?
DP: I really like being outdoors and spending time at the beach, so one of my favorite things to do in Boston is taking the ferry to the Harbor Islands and spending some time there. Every island has its own charm and beauty. Members of the Boston library can get the ferry tickets at 50% off.

Favorite Boston Bar/Restaurant?
DP: I live on the border of Somerville/ Medford, so my favorite restaurants are located on that side of the city. I love Dali on Washington street for tapas and Sarma has a delicious Middle Eastern inspired kitchen (they will be close to Gilman square station once the extension of the green line is finished).

Thank you Danielle! We are very lucky to have you on board and look forward to your new achievements!
Another year is about to end, and with that, we wanted to look back on the amazing events organized by the BCH PDA in 2021. Which one was your favorite?

Starting with our dearest Networking and Outreach Committee (NOC). Composed by Adam Kebede (until end of 2021) & Aram Ghalali as co-chairs, Danielle Peterse, Pooja Sanduja, Julia Tilburg, Michael Fairchild & Jingyuan Zhang, the social committee’s goal is to have postdocs from different departments and programs come together to get to know each other and to network. They organize monthly events ranging from pub tours to sports events.

On the right are some pictures of the funniest 2021 NOC events. Which one did you prefer? Are you more outdoor events, like the foliage trip or the kayaking adventure? Or more intellectual events, like the game night or the poetry competition? Give your feedback on our social media or send us an email at postdoc-social@childrens.harvard.edu.

Continuing with our Career Development (CD) Composed by Wade Sugden & Alessandra Ferraro as co-chairs, Caroline Schuster-Kubaczka, Jingyuan Zhang, Sreya Ghosh, Barbara Robens, Minmoy Das, Samik Chakraborty & Maheshwor Timilshina, the career development committee strives to provide information and training to help post-docs navigate career choices and develop professional skills needed to reach their career goals. They organize monthly seminars on diverse topics and provide resources to help post-docs during every step of their training.

One the right are the posters of the 2021 CD events. Which one did you prefer? Are you more interested in events related to academic jobs, industry jobs, or both? Would you like more events to develop skills, like mentoring undergrads or the peer-reviewing? Give your feedback on our social media or send us an email at postdoc-career@childrens.harvard.edu.
Last but not least, our Mentoring committee Composed by Jie Zheng & Sara Busatto as co-chairs, Michael Lombardo & Mrinmoy Das, the mentoring committee aims to help post-docs identify and develop skill sets required for a successful tenure at Boston Children’s Hospital and prepare them for life after post-doc. They organize peer-mentoring groups that meet on a regular basis during the academic year as well as an annual All-Star Mentoring Event with renowned faculty members in the Boston area. They are also in the process of organizing mentoring circles with scientists who work in industry. Stay tuned for more info!

Did you like this year’s mentoring events? Give your feedback on our social media or send us an email at postdoc-mentoring@childrens.harvard.edu.

2021 BCH BEST MENTORS

The BCH Best Mentor awards have been announced by Gus Cervini, VP of Research Administration, early November at the All-Star Mentoring event (top picture).

The J.F.P. Ullmann Mentoring Award was awarded to Dr. Jay Thiagarajah, from the Gastroenterology department (bottom left).

The BCH Postdoctoral Association Award was awarded to Dr. Stephen Sanders, from the Cardioiology & Cardiac Surgery department (bottom middle).

Also Dr. Kevin Churchwell, BCH President and CEO, was the keynote speaker for the night (bottom right) and gave a very inspiring talk about mentorship.

We warmly thank Gus Cervini, Dr. Kevin Churchwell and all the invited mentors for accepting the invitation. We thank all the attendees and hope you had a great night. And finally we sincerely thank the Mentoring committee for the organization of the event and especially Mrinmoy Das for his last event as co-chair within the PDA board,
BCH Postdoc Achievements!

If you would like to share a recently published a paper or award received: contact us at postdoc-publicaffairs@childrens.harvard.edu (provide your full name, lab, title and journal for publications and information on sponsor for awards).
Congrats to the authors and awardees!

Publications from BCH Postdocs

- **Tracey Suter**, Zhigang He Lab published 2 papers:
  - "How Oligodendrocytes Help your Brain Function" in Frontiers for Young Minds. 2021. [Link]
  - Utilizing mouse optic nerve crush to examine CNS ‘remyelination’ STAR Protocols. 2021 [Link]

- **Maria N Barrachina & Andrew P Stone**, Machlus lab (Vascular Biology Program) published this review "The Bone Marrow Niche from the Inside Out: How Megakaryocytes are Shaped by and Shape Hematopoiesis" in Blood. 2021. [Link]

- **Julia Tilburg & Isabelle C Becker**, Italiano Lab (Vascular Biology Program) published this review "Don’t you forget about me(gakaryocytes)" in Blood. 2021. [Link]


- **Eleanor Muise** (Pulmonary Medicine) published: "Ready, Set, Go! How the Heart and Lungs Respond to Exercise" in Frontiers for Young Minds. 2021. [Link]


Awards to BCH Postdocs

- **Adam Fiseha Kebede**, Shi lab (Newborn Medicine) was named of the 1,000 Inspiring Black Scientists in America Rising Stars in Cel-Mentor. 2021. [Link]

- **Jordan Roberts** (Rheumatology) received a “2021 Gary S. Gilkeson Career Development Award” from the Lupus Foundation of America for the work “Assessing the Impact of Immunosuppressants on Infections in Pediatric Lupus.” [Link]

- **Victor Fattori**, Rogers lab (Vascular Biology Program) has been named as Topic Editor for the journal Frontiers in Pharmacology and his research topic is on the “Use of Artificial Intelligence to Evaluate Drug-Related Behavioral Changes in Rodents”. He is co-editing this Research Topic with Dr. Rafael Gonzalez-Cano from University of Granada and Dr. Sara Gonzalez-Rodrigues from University of Oviedo. [Link]

Interested in a virtual scientific event or an online career development course but there’s a fee?

The PDA will fund up to $100 towards your registration fees!

Please submit an application by emailing postdoc@childrens.harvard.edu with the following information:
- Full name and Lab
- Title of the course
- Date of the event
- 4-5 lines about what motivates you to attend this course
Upcoming Events

Look out for our emails and subscribe to our calendar to find out about new events: tinyurl.com/BCHPDAcalendar

Career Development

Lessons Learned in 1yr as a PI (on the right)

Speakers: Elliott Hagedorn and Alejo Fraticelli

Date: Tuesday December 14th, 2021 3:00pm-4:00pm VIRTUAL

Register here

NOC

Holiday Party (on the bottom)

When: Friday, December 17th

Where: Longwood Hall at Longwood Galleria

Register here (place are limited)

Don’t miss the party of the year with games, gifts, appetizers and drinks!

Public Affairs

Vote for your favorite PDA and take the chance to win amazing PDA gears!

How to vote?

1. Go on Twitter (link) or Facebook (link) and vote indicating the number of your favorite event in comment!

2. Share the tweet with your colleagues and spread the word!

3. We will pick 2 winners per committee and contact them to pick up their kit!

Special Thanks & Welcome

The PDA would like to specially thank Kimberly Wong, Adam Kebede & Mrinmoy Das who served as co-President, co-chair of NOC and co-chair of Mentoring, respectively for several years. Now transitioning to another position or moving to another hospital, we wish you best of luck!

The PDA would also like to welcome all new PDA board members! All the board members are looking forward to network, organize events and have fun with you!

To join our next PDA board meeting, contact us at postdoc@childrens.harvard.edu
Leaving soon?

Send us your personal email address at postdoc@childrens.harvard.edu to register as BCH Alumni, to keep in touch with us and share your career path with the postdoc community.

OUR TEAM

PDA EXECUTIVE BOARD: Daniëlle Peterse and Sreya Ghosh (co-Presidents), Julie Senen (Treasurer), Caroline Schuster-Kubaczka (Secretary)

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF: Julie Senen

CONTENT: Julie Senen, Maria N. Barrachina, Alexis Caulier, Daniëlle Peterse, Sreya Ghosh

LAYOUT EDITOR: Maria N. Barrachina

To submit comments, articles, or ideas for future newsletters, please contact: Postdoc-publicaffairs@childrens.harvard.edu.

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