Re-envisioning the Future of Academic Training

Carolina Makowski Organizer
University of California, San Diego
San Diego, California
USA

Filip Morys Co-Organizer
McGill University
Montreal, Quebec
Canada

Phoebe Thomson Co-Organizer
University of Melbourne
Melbourne, Australia

Anne Billot Co-Organizer
Boston University
Boston, Massachusetts
USA

Overview

We believe the three topics mentioned above are extremely important and relevant for our trainees and early career researchers as they step up into leadership roles and navigate their career paths in the coming years. Our daily work routines and research have been impacted by COVID-19-related shutdowns for nearly two years now. This has forced us all to re-think and re-organize our priorities, as we strive towards making the best of what virtual platforms have to offer, maintaining a healthy work-life balance, and making critical changes to enhance representation, diversity and equity in STEM. This symposium presents independent yet complementary perspectives on how trainees can contribute to the betterment of their own personal growth and career, as well as thinking about how they can address diversity and equity through their own work in brain imaging. In summary, this symposium aims to provide a well-structured overview of lessons learned from senior faculty, as well as an early career researcher/physician, on how we can move academic and non-academic pursuits forward in a (post-)pandemic era and empower trainees with the tools they need to advance their careers. We aim for students to walk away with a clear understanding of how they can integrate the three learning objectives listed below into their own lab work and daily lives.

Lecture 1: *Navigating academia in a pandemic era*
Maria Natasha Rajah Presenter

The pandemic has impacted everyone's daily routine, both in terms of work and personal goals. The long sought-after concept of 'work-life balance' has never been more pertinent as these two worlds intersect more than ever before with increased remote work. Dr. Rajah will outline the changes and thought processes she has implemented to help cope and continue running her research programs successfully in the midst of a pandemic. Her talk will show trainees how they can focus on what they can control

during these uncertain times, how to more realistically and flexibly define goals, as well as the importance of rest to enhance productivity in the long run.

Lecture 2: *Translating your PhD to the academic and non-academic workforce*
Inger Mewburn Presenter

Covid-19 presents a massive disruption to the academic workforce. PhD students and early career researchers are worried about their future career prospects inside academia and confused about their options outside university walls. Dr. Mewburn's talk will summarize key changes that have emerged in the academic job market in the past two years, and the effects of resultant hiring freezes and travel restrictions, to help trainees plan ahead for those pursuing academic careers. She will also shine a spotlight on the non-academic job market, and how trainees can translate the academic skills they have gained in graduate school to career opportunities in industry with confidence.

Lecture 3: *Towards equitable brain science and brain health*
Victor Ekuta Presenter

Early and adequate intervention is paramount in treating any disease, including brain disorders. It is sobering to know that certain racial and ethnic groups are at a disadvantage simply because they do not get a timely diagnosis. Mr. Ekuta will highlight research in dementia that highlights the disparity in diagnoses given to Black, Asian and Hispanic patients compared to White patients. He will provide tangible examples of how our research can help address these pressing racial and ethnic inequities in healthcare, such as recruiting diverse populations in health research as well as increasing representation in STEM research more generally, educating underserved communities on brain health, conducting research to address structural and systemic root causes of disparity, and training clinicians to better meet the needs of vulnerable communities.