



The Post-y

Summer 2005

Semi-annual Newsletter of the Society of Toxicology Post-Doctoral Assembly

Greetings from the Chair

Jim Luyendyk

Greetings SOT Post-docs!

My name is Jim Luyendyk and I am currently the Chair of the SOT Post-doctoral Assembly (PDA). For many of you, this might be the first time you have heard of the PDA. Don't be surprised! We are a brand new group within SOT! The SOT Post-doctoral Task Force created the PDA with the assistance of Council as a way of engaging SOT's Post-doctoral membership in the Society's activities. SOT post-docs are members of the PDA and membership has its perks! See the post-doc web site for more info and make sure to take advantage of the opportunity to serve on the PDA's governing board or as a representative to a SOT Specialty Section or Committee. Getting post-docs involved in SOT is the PDA's job. We also hope to sponsor seminars and awards for the PDA membership. These projects and others are "in the works" and you can become



Jim Luyendyk, Marion Ehrich and George Corcoran engage post-docs during the mixer at SOT 2005.

involved. Visit our web site to find more information and become more involved in the SOT and the PDA.

Sincerely,
Jim Luyendyk
Society of Toxicology
SOT-PDA Chair

PDA Proposal Approved!

Jennifer Duringer

In late May, SOT Council accepted our proposal for the formation of the Post-Doctoral Assembly (PDA) with a few revisions. To view the proposal in its entirety, go to www.toxicology.org/ai/spd/PD-Resources.asp. Some of the main points include:

- Outline for establishment of a governing board.
- Membership requirements for the PDA.
- Current and future activities, including events and programs focused on enhancing the post-doctoral experience in the Society.

Inside this issue:

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Council made special note of the following items:

- An interest in sending another SOT Post-doc to the 2006 National Post-doctoral Association meeting to keep in touch with the progress of this group.
- Support for development of a post-doctoral travel award(s). Council would like the PDA to submit a supplemental request outlining some procedures through which this award(s) would be administered. One potential mode is to request that travel awards be administered through regional chapters based on criteria set by the PDA at the national level.

Official Name Selected

A poll was recently conducted via the Yahoo! listserv to select an official name for the post-doctoral group within the Society in partial fulfillment of our proposal to become a more permanent entity.

The choices were:

- o SOT-PDA (post-doctoral assembly)
- o SOT-PDO (post-doctoral organization)
- o SOT-PDC (post-doctoral connection)
- o SOT-PDC (post-doctoral coalition)
- o SOT-PDG (post-doctoral group)

SOT-PDA (post-doctoral assembly) won with 45% of the vote and thus became the official title of our group.



Post-Doctoral Web Page Goes Live!

L. Peyton Myers

The PDA web site has gone live with updates and upgrades. Similar to the original postdoctoral web site, the PDA web site includes information about the 2006 Annual meeting as well as networking information and SOT awards.

The Post-Doctoral resources section has also been updated. It contains a great deal of information beneficial to SOT post-docs. Furthermore, we have uploaded all of the documents (such as this newsletter, the by-laws, etc) for the SOT post-docs to the PDA web page.

The basic outline of the PDA web page:

- **PDA** page
- **What's New** page
- **Resources** page
 - Link to **SOT Awards** page that has been upgraded to be searchable within SOT for all awards that relate to post-docs
 - **Leadership development** information
 - **Networking** information
 - **Postdoctoral opportunities** within SOT
- **PDA** Officers
- **Public outreach** page
 - Who We Are information
 - Why Join the PDA
- **Documents** section
 - Includes bylaws, newsletters, etc

Please feel free to drop by our web site <http://www.toxicology.org/ai/spd/PD.asp>. If you have suggestions on how the web page can be upgraded to better serve the SOT post-docs, please feel free to E-mail us at SOTPDTF@yahoogroups.com.

Future Activities for the Post-Doctoral Assembly

Mark Powley

As a result of the efforts of SOT post-doctoral task force (PDTF/PDA) members, there are several exciting activities and proposals currently in the planning stages. The intended impact of these initiatives is ultimately to improve the post-doctoral experience for those in toxicology and related fields. Here are just a few of the ideas:

- Leadership development programs to help post-docs understand the structure and function of SOT and identify advancement and leadership opportunities.
- Opportunities will be provided to PDA members to act as representatives to SOT Committees and Specialty Sections.
- Collaborations with Career Resource and Development Services (CRAD) and the SOT Program Committee to develop a session at the annual meeting to focus on improving the post-doctoral experience.
- The 1st official post-doc mixer, separate from the Graduate Students, will be held at the 2006 annual meeting. There will be a time to socialize and network with other post-docs, a PDA business meeting, and a keynote address.

“The intended impact of these initiatives is ultimately to improve the post-doctoral experience for those in toxicology and related fields.”

New Task Forces and Proposals

Mark Powley

The PDA will initiate the creation of three task forces:

1. One task force will be designed to address issues encountered during post-doctoral research experience and maintain an active relationship with institutional and national post-doctoral associations.
2. Another task force will be formed to work with the SOT Membership Committee and address issues including tracking of the SOT student/post-doctoral membership, transition to Associate member status, etc.
3. One of the largest challenges the PDA faces is identifying means of communicating the almost overwhelming amount of information and opportunities available to post-doctoral SOT members. The Post-y newsletter is only one of several media that we hope will serve in this capacity. Our web site contains links to numerous external post-doctoral organizations as well. The PDA recognizes that the SOT post-doctoral membership is in fact the best source for post-doctoral information. However, for an individual to effectively collect, organize, and distribute submitted links, documents, etc., is simply unrealistic. Accordingly, the PDA board has proposed the creation of a Communications Working Group (CWG). The CWG will consist of PDA members and will

function primarily to review materials both submitted to and developed by the PDA. Furthermore, the CWG will submit recommendations to the PDA board regarding distribution of materials/editorial comments. If you are interested in becoming a member of the CWG, the first step is to contact Jim Luyendyk.

The PDA will also draft two proposals:

- The first proposal asks to increase the number of SOT awards available to post-docs.
- A second proposal is being prepared to request a session at the annual meeting to highlight research conducted by post-docs. The initial format would allow selected speakers to give short presentations describing their research findings in a forum open to all meeting attendees.

Look for more details on these and other exciting initiatives being developed by the PDA. If you would like to contribute, now is the time to get involved and help shape the future of this group!

Governing Board Approved by Council

In order to facilitate the organization process during the initial year of the PDA, a governing board has been appointed by SOT Council. The following individuals have been appointed to serve until May 2006:

- Chair: Jim Luyendyk
- Co-chair: Jennifer Durringer
- Counselor: Peyton Myers
- Secretary/Treasurer: Mark Powley

After May 2006, the election process will take over as outlined in the PDA proposal. Briefly, elections will take place whereby three candidates selected by the PDA governing board will give a brief statement on the PDA's web site stating why they feel they would be a good choice for a given position. Elections will be conducted electronically, and results tallied and reported to the PDA membership during the SOT annual meeting. Co-chair, counselor and secretary/treasurer will be elected positions. The co-chair, after 1 year of service, will transition to the chair position.

These individuals were among the group of leaders whose efforts were the driving force for the Post-Doctoral Task Force and are committed to serving the PDA and making it a successful part of the Society of Toxicology. A proposal has been submitted to fund an off-site business meeting for the governing board in the winter of 2005-06 to benefit the planning process for the PDA's activities at SOT 2006.

We welcome your input throughout the year. Our contact information can be found on the SOT post-doctoral web site!

SOT Post-doctoral Assembly Visits the National Post-doctoral Association

Mark Powley

SOT post-doctoral fellows, at the direction of SOT Council, are organizing and have chosen to call their group the SOT Post-doctoral Assembly (PDA). Jim Luyendyk, the Chair of the group, attended the meeting of the National Post-doctoral Association (NPA) last March. The PDA would like post-docs and mentors alike to know about the rich resources available on the NPA web site at www.nationalpostdoc.org. One of the resources is a detailed listing of Recommended Post-Doctoral Policies. The following review outlines these recommendations.

An important step towards becoming an independent investigator usually includes spending time as a post-doctoral researcher. During this transitional period between graduate school and a permanent position, it is important to make sure the specific needs of these individuals are met. To assure that the issues and needs unique to post-docs are addressed, the NPA has developed a list of policy recommendations (www.nationalpostdoc.org/policy/Recommended_Practices.pdf). The recommendations provided by the NPA are based on feedback from the Committee for Science, Engineering, and Public Policy (COSEPUP) of the National Academy of Sciences and data collected from more than sixty institutions. The impact of the recommendations is maximized by detailing the responsibilities of the institution, mentor, and trainee in the training process.

The following are examples of policies that should be defined:

1. **Utilize a centralized appointment process.** A formal appointment process could benefit both the institution and the individual. This process should include a letter detailing conditions of employment (i.e., verification of funding and conditions for re-appointment, as well as stipend and benefits information). By having a standardized process, institutions will be able to accurately track post-docs.
2. **Establish a curriculum for post-doctoral training.** Institutions should develop guidelines for determining when a post-doc is sufficiently trained for an independent career. These should address the responsibilities of the institution, mentor, and trainee. The guidelines can be used to provide a framework for setting goals and timelines as well as for monitoring progress.
3. **Provide equal access to benefits regardless of funding source.** The same benefits should be extended to all post-docs, without consideration of the source of funding.
4. **Establish time frame for postdoctoral transition to independence.** Taking into account previous post-doctoral experience, institutions should set a time limit defining the maximum length of a post-doctoral appointment. Extensions should be permitted if beneficial to the post-doc.
5. **Establish a minimum baseline stipend, plus a stipend scale.** The NIH NRSA pay scale should be adopted by departments funded through the NIH. Furthermore, there should be a regional cost of living adjustment.
6. **Conduct an entry/exit interview.** Post-docs should be interviewed by an administrative body representative within three months of arriving at an institution and again prior to leaving. This will provide data on the initial expectations of post-docs and will confirm that these expectations were actually met. The information can be used to determine the effectiveness of a program, help make improvements in future training, and provide means for an alumni network.
7. **Allow matched contributions to a retirement program.** Because of the age of post-docs and/or the duration of tenure, employer-matched retirement savings are an important consideration.
8. **Extend family-friendly benefits to all post-docs.** Benefits packages should take into account the importance of family life. The benefits offered to post-docs may include adherence to the family and medical leave act for non-employees, maternity/paternity leave, access to institutional child care and/or subsidies, health insurance coverage for dependents, and support programs for foreign spouses.

Additional considerations:

1. **Establish a post-doctoral office that actively engages post-doctoral scholars.** An opportunity for communicating with and offering input to the administration could be best provided by having two groups dedicated to post-doctoral affairs. This would include both a post-doctoral office staffed by the institution and a post-doctoral association staffed by post-docs. The NPA web site provides a toolkit for starting a post-doctoral association. This web site can be found at: www.nationalpostdoc.org/committees/outreach_committee/PDAtoc. (continued on page 5, National Post-Doctoral Association)

From page 4, National Post-Doctoral Association

2. **Facilitate effective mentoring and personal responsibility through an individual development plan (IDP) with annual review.** This could be used as a guide for the entrance and exit interview previously described and will foster effective communication between mentor and post-doc. It should identify expectations, define success, underline the importance of training and service, and allow for the pursuit of additional opportunities as they become available. By reviewing the plan annually, the post-doc and mentor will have the opportunity to assure progress and to modify the training plan as needed.
3. **Maintain an office for international scholar services.** International post-docs face additional issues that are not encountered by citizens. An office should be available for these individuals to address their needs. The NPA provides a survival guide for international post-docs on their web site (access requires membership): www.nationalpostdoc.org/committees/IPC_Committee/IPSurvivalGuide.
4. **Create and disseminate a post-doctoral handbook.** This book should be a combined effort of the Post-doctoral Association, Post-doctoral Office, and the International Scholar Office. It should contain complete policy information and important contact information.
5. **Offer career development/transition services.** To assure that post-docs can fully develop in all aspects of their training, development services should be provided by the institution. This could include instruction in mentoring, managing a laboratory, teaching, and grant writing, as well as providing access to relevant web-based resources and offering career-enhancement awards.

Implementation of these recommendations would provide a framework to improve the post-doctoral experience. It would assure that institutions and mentors will be able to provide a flexible, productive training environment for post-docs, who in turn, will be able to focus on their research and training. The ultimate result is that individuals will be better prepared for their future roles as independent investigators.

Regional Chapter News

National Capital Area Chapter ~ Devon Graham, NCAC-SOT Student Vice-Rep



As for the chapter as a whole, we are in the process of preparing for the 2005 Fall Symposium. In terms of programs aimed specifically at post-docs, Mashael Al-Namaeh, the head student representative for NCAC, and I are in the process of planning the Student Fall Symposium, aimed at post-docs and students specifically. These symposia focus on topics that are relevant to this group. We are still working on the topic, but more info will be posted soon on the NCAC web site (<http://www.toxicology.org/isot/rc/ncac/Default.htm>). Additionally, NCAC offers the Bern Schwetz Travel Award to both students and post-docs to defray the cost of traveling to the SOT Annual Meeting. We also have a poster contest (with cash prizes!) during the spring symposium for students and post-docs. More information is located on the NCAC web site.

Pacific Northwest Association of Toxicology (PANWAT) ~ Jennifer Duringer, PANWAT member



PANWAT will be having their annual meeting on the Oregon coast at the Astoria Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites on September 8-9, 2005. The theme of the conference is "Nutraceutical Development and Safety Assessment." Abstract (250 words or less) deadline is August 8th and should be submitted to Rosita Proteau at rosita.proteau@oregonstate.edu. Also, there will be prize awards given to graduate students and post-doctorates for the best platform presentation as well as best poster presentation! The total registration costs are \$95 for students and \$170 for post-docs and faculty. Registration forms are due August 18th to Cecile Kresja at krejsac@zgi.com.

Allegheny-Erie Chapter of the Society of Toxicology ~ Udayan Apte, AESOT member



The 17th Annual Spring Meeting of Allegheny-Erie Chapter of the Society of Toxicology (AE-SOT) was held at the Hillman Cancer Center of the University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA on May 20, 2005. The meeting was very successful. The total attendance was 46, which included faculty, postdoctoral fellows and students. There were 5 posters on display and awards for best overall poster (won by post-doctoral fellow, Dr. Pallavi Limaye, University of Pittsburgh) and best methodology (won by Elena Kisin, NIOSH) were given. The main theme of the meeting was metal-induced toxicity. The program included an interesting keynote address by Ellen Silbergeld, from the Department of Environmental Health, Johns Hopkins University. Her topic was "Mercury and the Immune System: Old Wine in New Bottles?" In addition, Aaron Barchowsky, from the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health, University of Pittsburgh spoke about "Chromium signaling in the lung: A case of stolen transcription."

If you have information on your regional SOT chapter you would like to submit for future issues, please send us an E-mail at SOTPDF@yahoo.com.

From the Trenches...

A continuing series of individual stories, issues and advice. The information provided does not necessarily represent the position of the PDA or SOT.

Daniel F. Muldoon

You may have seen that spoof of inspirational posters that says, "Mistakes: It could be that the purpose of your life is only to serve as a warning to others." The caption is beneath a picture of a sinking ship. Although that is way too gloomy for me to adopt as a serious motto, my post-post-doc experience could be a warning to others.

I graduated from Creighton University in 1995 after studying oxidative injury induced by the protein toxin ricin. From there I went to a post-doc at the U.S. Army natural-toxins lab in Frederick, Maryland, through the National Research Council. My graduate advisor and alma mater are both well respected, and with an NRC fellowship under my belt it looked like I had nowhere to go but up.

Only problem was my heart wasn't really in it. After a lot of soul-searching I concluded that I would rather be an architect.

As an architect, a toxicologist has something to offer: research facilities planning skills are hard to come by. You may have worked in a few laboratories whose designers excel at office parks or condominiums, but don't have a clue what goes on in a lab.

Architecture school is very competitive and those coming from unrelated fields are at a major disadvantage. So I was going to work as a model maker/illustrator, since my skills in those areas are good enough for people to pay for them. And some architects and design students thought my strategy would work. But thanks to computer technology, little demand is left for specialists in models or drawings, especially in the Midwest, where I was relocating.

I didn't bother to arrange for a new toxicology job to begin after my post-doc ended, and ended up working clerical jobs through a temp agency. Temporary clerical positions make post-docs look like Donald Trump. It was hard enough to pay bills, to say nothing of spending money job hunting. While I now have a "permanent" office job, I've failed to break out of the vicious cycle wherein the longer I've been out of science, the harder it is to get back in.

The biggest mistake I made back in my post-doc years was to have no plan B. I bailed out without having something else to get into. Yet, my dedication and experience provided plenty of skills that don't necessitate working at the bench. I remember the rush I felt at the realization that "I'm an internationally published author." The articles likely would never become Citation Classics, but just being in print was enough. Better yet, researchers (e.g., Kumar et al., *Toxicol* 41, pp. 333-338, 2003) have quoted the work. Had I given it more thought back then, I would have looked into freelance and other writing opportunities before my finances went down the toilet. That is the direction I'm looking at now, but I'm not quitting my day job this time until I'm hired into something better.

The message to the reader is to look at what you enjoy doing now and can do well without having to go back to school. Don't just say, "I hate this and I want to be a ____." Above all be patient; I wasn't. Had I been willing to take a longer time to make the transition or come up with alternatives that would be partially satisfying, I probably would have been better off. The old cliché is right: hindsight is 20/20.

"Above all be patient...Had I been willing to take a longer time to make the transition or come up with alternatives that would be partially satisfying, I probably would have been better off."

Reference links for alternate career choices

Alternate Careers for Scientists ~ <http://www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/Hangar/4707/alt-careers.html>

National Post-Doctoral Association career page ~ http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/for_postdocs/for_postdocs/scientist_careers/

Guide to Online Employment and Career Links for the Biomedical Scientist ~ <http://www.his.com/~graeme/employ.html#educ>

Career Transitions from the journal *Science* ~ <http://nextwave.sciencemag.org/trn.dtl>

Alternate Career Routes to the Ivory Tower ~ <http://career.ucsd.edu/sa/PDFArticles/GNonAcademicCareersforScientistsatUniversitiesArticle.pdf>

A Misfit Scientist Goes to Washington ~ http://infocusmagazine.org/2.1/20_20.html

Off the Bench-Career Options for Scientists ~ <http://chronicle.com/jobs/2002/07/2002071001c.htm>

Careers in Science and Engineering: A Student Planning Guide to Grad School and Beyond ~ <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/5129.html>

Enhancing the Postdoctoral Experience for Scientists and Engineers: A Guide for Postdoctoral Scholars, Advisers, Institutions, Funding Organizations, and Disciplinary Societies ~ <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/9831.html>

Post-doctoral Awards



Udayan Apte has been busy drafting a proposal regarding addition of awards offered to post-docs by the Society. These include:

1. Creation of post-doctoral awards in each Regional Chapter to be administered at the Regional Chapter level using suggested guidelines of the PDA. A survey has been developed to assess how each Regional Chapter currently addresses post-doctoral awards.

Working with Specialty Sections to increase the number of scientific awards for post-docs. We plan to request time at their meetings at SOT 2006 to discuss this possibility. Questions to consider include: "Are post-docs and students currently lumped in the awards system?.....Would they

consider breaking them into two separate categories?...Would financial incentive from the PDA assist Specialty Sections in creating post-doc awards??"

3. Establishing an award recognizing excellence in post-doctoral research to be administered by the Education Committee. Financial dimension of the award will be at the discretion of Council. One possibility is that the awardee will have their travel to the meeting paid for. The PDA needs to develop a list of criteria that will be used.

You will find a link to the Awards database from the post-doctoral web site. SOT has listed all of the awards in a searchable database, so you can use "post-doc" as a criterion to find relevant award descriptions.

SOT Membership Information

Mark Powley

Are you aware that there are actually three types of SOT membership available to post-docs? One option is to become a Graduate Student/Post-Doctoral member, or you can apply for Associate or Full membership, depending upon your level of experience in toxicology and your publication record.

Graduate Student/Post-Doctoral member benefits include receiving SOT Publications, the ability to submit unsponsored abstracts for the annual meeting, eligibility for travel awards and fellowships, and reduced fees for both annual meeting registration and for Career Resource and Development Services. The application process is simple and requires only a certification by your advisor. This membership is currently offered at a rate of \$20.

The second type of SOT membership available to post-docs is the Associate membership. Membership criteria involve demonstrated professional activities in toxicology, evidence of continuing professional involvement, and sponsorship by two Full SOT members. The benefits associated with this type of membership include those of the Graduate Student/Post-Doctoral members plus eligibility for participation on many SOT appointed committees, eligibility for many of SOT's awards, access to the electronic version of Toxicological Sciences, and the ability to sponsor non-member colleague abstracts at the Annual Meeting.

The third type of SOT membership available to post-docs is Full membership. In addition to the benefits available to Graduate Student/Post-Doctoral and Associate members, a Full Member is eligible to serve as an SOT officer, Regional Chapter officer, and on an elected committee. A Full Member has voting privileges and has unrestricted eligibility to participate on SOT's appointed committees.

NEW!!! SOT encourages those who have been Student/Post-doctoral members for one year or more to apply for associate or full membership to take advantage of a broader range of membership benefits. If the student applicant qualifies for a different membership category, the student will be accepted as an associate or full member but will continue to pay dues at the student rate (\$20) for one year as well as receive a free specialty section membership for that year.

No matter which type you pursue, you will find membership in the SOT to be a valuable part of your career development. For full details, please visit the web site <http://www.toxicology.org/ai/mi/memberinfo.asp>.

Highlights from the Annual Meeting

Jennifer Duringer

Sunday evening break-out session

In an effort to engage post-doctoral members of the Society, the PDA, past-president Marion Ehrich and president-elect George Corcoran met with post-docs during the Sunday evening Student/Post-Doc mixer. Dr. Ehrich (council liaison for the PDA) spoke with great enthusiasm to our group about the importance of being part of the Society and all of the advantages membership offers. Dr. Corcoran echoed the same excitement and emphasized Council's support of our group becoming a more stable entity.

Coffee meeting

Members of the PDA (Peyton Myers, Jenni Duringer, Mark Powley and Jim Luyendyk) met with president-elect George Corcoran over coffee and beignets Wednesday morning to brainstorm about the future of the PDA. For the most part, attendees of this meeting were in agreement that the Committee structure of the SAC is unlikely to function well at the post-doctoral level given the much shorter duration of post-doctoral positions. A different structure was suggested and is the basis of the proposal sent to SOT council for formation of the PDA.

Other issues brought up at the meeting include:

- Can we create (or have access to) an E-mail list of current post-docs in the Society?
- How do we encourage post-doctoral involvement at the Regional Chapter level?
- Can there be a seamless transition from SAC involvement to membership in the PDA?
- Addition of post-doctoral awards at the annual meeting



Resources: International PostDoc Survival Guide

The Survival Guide is intended to help international post-docs navigate life and work in the United States. It includes information on how the postdoctoral training experience in the U.S. differs from other countries, tips on how to cope with personal and professional challenges as an international post-doc, guidance on the various types of visas, questions to ask prospective mentors and institutions before accepting a position in the U.S., illuminating personal stories from international post-docs from various countries, and a comprehensive database of web resources for post-docs in other countries. To access, please visit:

http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/committees/IPC_Committee/IPSurvivalGuide/.