



BRIGHAM AND WOMEN'S HOSPITAL POSTDOCTORAL ASSOCIATION

The BWH Post(Doc)

FALL/WINTER 2019



PostDoctoral Association

IN THIS ISSUE

Postdoctoral Benefits and Financial Planning: Supporting the Postdoc Community

By Priyadarshini Kachroo, Ph.D.

On behalf of the PDA, I would like to thank Kryste Ferguson (M.Ed., Manager of Membership and Special Projects, National Postdoctoral Association - NPA) for taking out the time and sharing the sources with me about the current state and standards of postdoctoral benefits in United States.

This is an area that institutions have approached in different ways depending on their organizational structure, leadership's priorities and postdoc classifications such as institutionally (e.g. funding by T32 grants), individually (e.g. funding by American Heart Association) or externally funded postdocs and trainees (e.g. fellowships paid by postdoc's home country). The NPA's Institutional Policy Survey Report 2017-2018 does have aggregate data reported on this topic. Majority of postdocs consist of international researchers on temporary J1 visas; therefore, these positions are usually temporary by law with a maximum term limit of 5 years and therefore talking about benefits is rather controversial, debatable and complicated with current government and system.

As per the NPA report distributed to 190 member institutions, 103 institutions (54%) completed the survey (For complete list, refer [NPA](#)). Most of the responding institutions (84% required and 6% recommended) supported having a minimum salary/stipend, however very few require having an annual stipend increase. As of 2018, NIH pay scale for post-docs stands at \$50,004 per year. Brigham & Women's Hospital (BWH) has a postdoctoral policy that requires minimum salary compensation and annual increase as per the NIH scale for years 0-2. Further, availability of health insurance plans including vision and dental coverage and other fringe benefits are provided to postdocs at partners rate on all federal fellowships if the post-docs receive a minimum salary of \$10,000 through payroll. NPA recommends having a minimum stipend amount in accordance with the NIH scale with a unified benefits package for all postdocs tailored specifically to their needs and establish an annual increase based on postdoc's experience. For example, the University of Pennsylvania, Case Western Reserve University and the University of California (UC) adopted this approach. University of Chicago provides a small stipend to non-employee post-docs to cover insurance costs.

Continued on [page 6](#)

Postdoc Benefits [Page 1](#)

Are you aware of the financial benefits offered by the BWH? How does the BWH compare to other US institutions?

Patenting 101 [Page 2](#)

Learn about the process of getting your idea to the market.

Motherhood and Postdoc [Page 3](#)

A glance into balancing motherhood and being a postdoctoral fellow.

MCP Celebration Highlight [Page 3](#)

Photos from the MCP End of Year Celebration event and the winners of the 2019 Postdoctoral Scholar Award for Excellence in Mentoring.

U.S. Culture [Page 4](#)

The American way of living, as seen from an Asian and European perspective

Upcoming Events [Page 4](#)

Career Spotlight [Page 5](#)

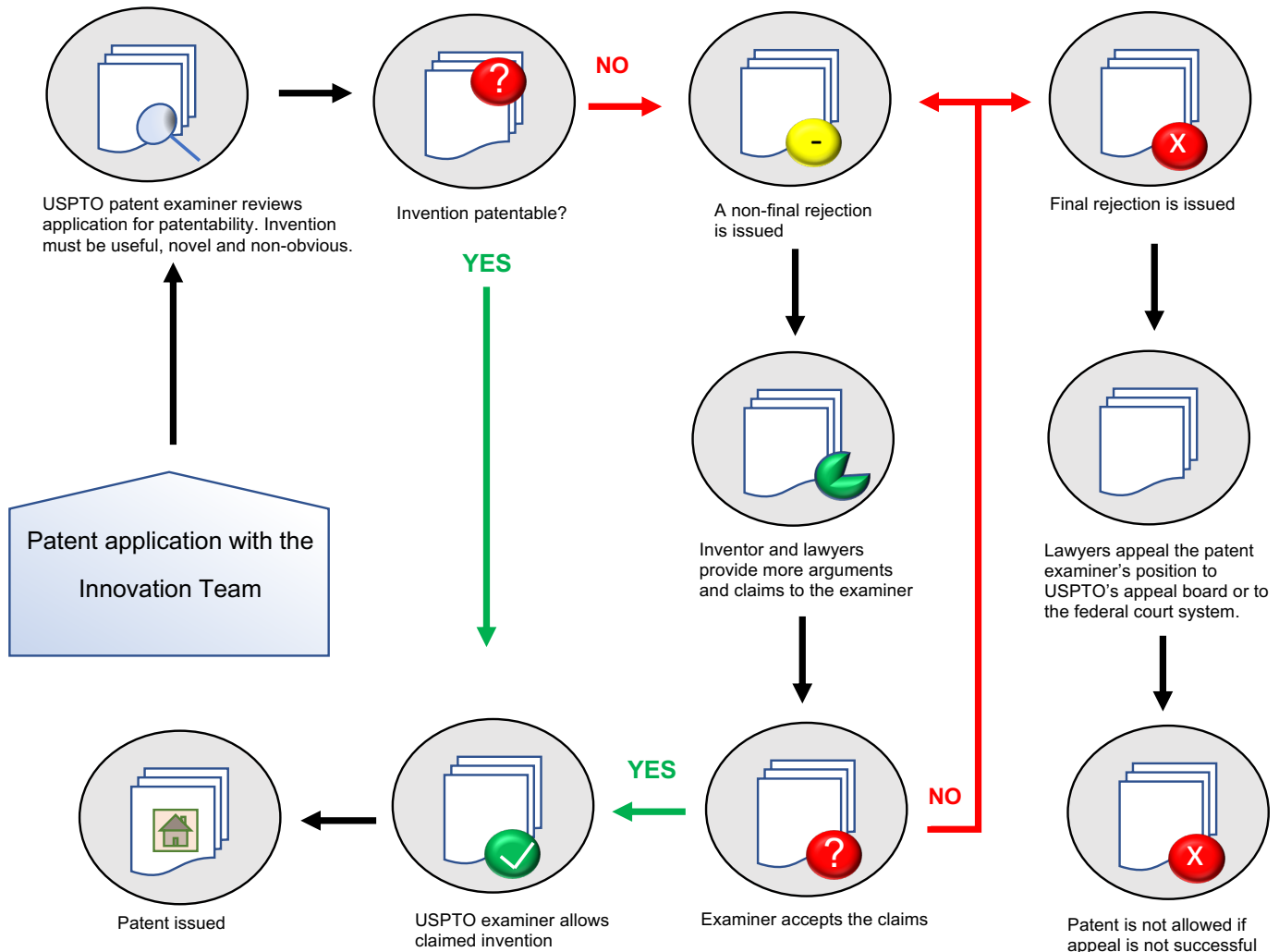
What does it take to transition from postdoc to editor of a scientific journal? Read on to find out.

Getting Ideas to Market—Part I

by Andreea Stancu, Ph.D.

Researchers and innovators conduct cutting-edge scientific research that can improve quality of care, combat diseases, save lives, and ultimately benefit the society. For these discoveries to reach the highest impact, they must be conveyed into services and products to reach the unmet medical needs and improve the well-being for the public.

The journey from bench discovery or invention to a product on the market is complex and lengthy. Once the researchers think there might be a scientific discovery or clinical innovation that may have commercial potential and could advance patient care, they should submit an [invention disclosure form](#) to the assigned [institutional innovation team](#) to protect the invention through an Intellectual Property (IP) disclosure. It is highly important for the protection and commercialization of the invention that the disclosure is filed prior to any public statements describing the discovery, that includes any presentation outside the institution or publishing. In order to protect the invention, the institution’s lawyers file for a provisional patent. The U.S. provisional patent applications are not examined and represent a one-year “placeholder” until a regular application is filed. This temporary document possesses a numerous benefit, such as providing an additional year of patent protection, establishing a priority date and fewer requirements than a regular U.S. application.



Continued on [page 6](#)

MCP END OF YEAR CELEBRATION

The Mentoring Circles Program (MCP) is a peer-based mentoring system that was started in 2013 by two former postdocs who identified a need for postdocs to seek professional development guidance beyond their academic advisor. The program has been largely successful, growing from 18 participating postdocs to over 70 postdocs in the current cycle.

On May 16, the End of Year Celebration event was held to commemorate the 2018-19 cycle, and to kick off applications for the following year. The annual event is open to the entire BWH community and celebrates all postdoctoral mentors, as well as those who mentor postdocs. In particular, two postdoctoral fellows who have demonstrated exceptional dedication to mentoring are recognized and presented with the Postdoctoral Scholar Award for Excellence in Mentoring, a \$1000 travel grant sponsored by the Brigham Research Institute (BRI) and the Office of Research Careers (ORC). The 2019 winners were and Shabir Hassan, Ph.D. and Ashley Ogawa-Wong, Ph.D.



The 2019 Postdoctoral Scholar Award for Excellence in Mentoring was presented at the MCP End of Year Celebration event. Pictured from left: Jasneet Khalsa, Ph.D.; Ashley Ogawa-Wong, Ph.D.; Angela Vail; Allison Moriarty, MPH; Shabir Hassan, Ph.D.; Jacqueline Slavik, Ph.D., MMS; Sayeda Yasmin-Karem, M.D., Ph.D.



Former MCP directors were invited to share how the program shaped their career. Margaret Parker, Ph.D. (left; 2017-18 co-director) with Sayeda Yasmin-Karem, M.D., Ph.D. (right; 2018-19 co-director).

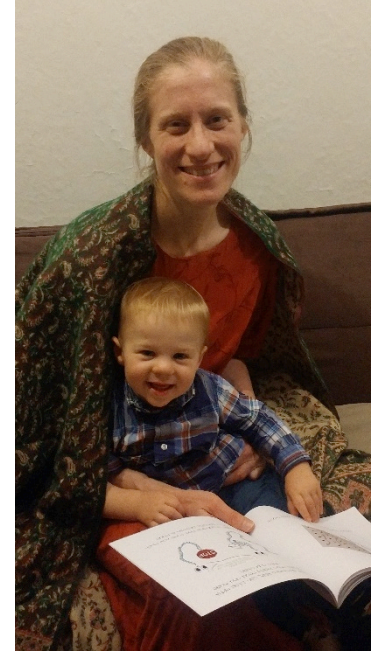
For more information about the MCP program or the Postdoctoral Scholar Award, please visit the [PDA website](#) or contact the 2019-20 MCP co-directors, [Anna Marneth, Ph.D.](#) and [Priyadarshini Kachroo, Ph.D.](#)

Balancing Motherhood and Being a Postdoctoral Fellow: Change is the Only Constant

by Oana Zeleznik, Ph.D.

Being a postdoctoral fellow is a challenging task on its own, but it pales when compared to being a mother and a postdoctoral fellow at the same time. Beth Zucconi, mother of a 1-year old and postdoctoral fellow at the Brigham and Women's Hospital, agreed to share her experience with us.

A typical day in Beth's life starts early, around 5:30 am, when she and her husband have breakfast together. Following breakfast, Beth's husband leaves for work and she works for about an hour until her baby boy wakes up. She then feeds him and gets them both ready for the day. Her baby has gone to daycare since he was 6 months old, before which Beth had help from a nanny who would meet her in the NRB cafeteria to pick up the baby. Conveniently, the nanny would bring him back to be nursed when Beth had a break and drop him off again when Beth was ready to go home. Nowadays, Beth takes the T to and from daycare, which adds an extra hour to her commute. Additionally, because she is not nursing throughout the day, she needs to use the pumping room. Unfortunately, ones with fast pumps are sometimes busy, so Beth had to start a signup sheet for her favorite pumping room. However, that hasn't slowed Beth down, if anything it's only increased her efficiency. In fact, Beth told me that she logs lab deliveries while pumping. She also mentioned that she once refused to move her samples from the lab freezer to a freezer outside the lab because it would take her extra time to access the samples. To increase her efficiency even more, Beth now plans her time in greater detail. Because she plans and analyzes experiments from home, it is crucial she knows exactly what needs to be done in the lab when she arrives and what can be done at home. Beth picks her baby up from daycare around 5 pm, after which her husband takes over so that she can work for another 1-2 hours in the evening. While they're waiting on Beth, her husband and son like to go to the park or ride the T – the baby's favorite activities. As you might imagine, Beth's day doesn't slow down until after her baby boy goes to sleep around 9 pm. Beth moved to Boston 2 years ago and, consequently, gave up the friends and support network she built during ten years of graduate school and postdoctoral training in Baltimore, MD and at Johns Hopkins University. Having to manage without any help from family and friends has only made the situation more challenging for this young family.



I was very surprised to hear that Beth took only 2 months (BWH provides 8 weeks paid and 4 weeks unpaid parental leave, regardless of gender) of maternity leave because she was given false information from BWH Human Resources. Once everything was sorted out, it was too late: "I had my experiments up and running". While it was easy to obtain departmental approval from BWH for her baby to be allowed anywhere food is allowed, Beth is often surprised by the inflexibility of some senior researchers (not from BWH). In one instance, she was granted permission to attend a non-BWH departmental retreat only under the condition that her 2.5-month-old baby stayed off-site and only shortly before event registration ended, making it impossible for her to plan accordingly to attend. After realizing this retreat was scheduled to happen when she should have still been on maternity leave only left Beth more frustrated. On another occasion when her nanny was sick, she and her sleeping baby were asked to leave a seminar by a senior female scientist (again, not from BWH). Despite these instances, Beth emphasized that there were also seminars, such as her departmental seminar and the DFCL epigenetics seminar, where both she and her baby felt welcome and she could nurse him when needed.

Continued on page 4

Adjusting to U.S. American Culture: Perspectives from International Postdocs

by Guyu Quin, Ph.D. and Rafik Boudra, Ph.D.

Coming to the USA to live and work is an exciting experience, but it can take some time to adjust to the unique American culture. We wanted to highlight and compare some features of American culture viewed from the perspectives of two international postdocs from China (Tracey) and France (Rafik) currently at BWH.

Greeting and Personal Space: First, let's look at greeting customs. In the U.S., hugging is common between friends and family. However, in China, hugging is pretty rare and regardless of how close people are. On the opposite end of the spectrum in France, cheek kisses are the usual way to greet familiar people and can extend to a stranger in a casual setting. However, similar to the U.S., in a business/formal setting a handshake is the standard. In the U.S., people tend to be more open to greet strangers, even if the encounter does not lead to a new friendship. In comparison, French tends to be less open to random encounter, but more willing to follow up with the one they had. To unfamiliar people, Chinese also tends to be less open. But Chinese tends to express more concern about the health of a friend, and offer advice enthusiastically, like "keep warm", "drink more liquid", and so on.

Buying secondhand items is a good way to save money: Big cities in the U.S. have high cost of living, plus U.S. dollar is one of the strongest currencies in the world. A good way to save money is to buy used items. People in the U.S. are more willing to buy secondhand items. They can buy secondhand items from thrift shops, yard sales, online vendors and even get free used items on streets in residential areas. For example, during "Allston Christmas", outgoing renters and especially college students leave their unwanted possessions out in the streets for those who may want the items, such as; couches, tables, kitchenware and clothing. In comparison to China, this is not the norm and people would be shy to buy secondhand. Living in Boston is expensive, so don't feel embarrassed to buy secondhand items.

Communication and Paying methods: While postal mails and e-mail are heavily used in the USA, and probably even more in France, smartphone app based communication are preferred for both personal and business purposes in China, such as WeChat and QQ. Chinese are so fond of technologies that they mainly use next-generation payment platforms using smartphones instead of credit cards, which is also a trend in the USA and France. However, credit cards are very rare in France, as people use mainly debit cards. There is no credit score, and people get their mortgage based on their income and current debt status.

Winter is here: Finally, we wanted to talk about something which is a painful reality and a significant part of the year when you live in Boston; WINTER. Winter in Boston can be more extreme than in Western Europe and in most parts of China. Real feel temperatures often fall below 0°F (-17.8°C) and days get very short (oh yes, there is this imperial measurement unit system too, hopefully you'll get used to it). Nothing unmanageable though, just make sure to buy proper winter gear. On the bright side, once this difficult period is over, summer and fall are stunning in New-England, so just hang in there!

Differences enrich our lives! These are just a few notable differences between life here and back home in France and China. Most of the differences are quite enjoyable. Although some of them can make adjusting to life a bit harder, all these differences that we encounter contribute to enriching the experience of living in the USA.

...Continued from [page 3](#)

For purposes of accommodating all researchers, Beth suggested that baby rooms with one-way mirror glass windows, which allow light to travel in only one direction, and piped in sound would be a good solution - at least for some of the larger seminar rooms. She also suggested that having access to a network of more experienced mother-scientists would have been helpful. Though she has been able to identify female colleagues willing to help and share their experiences, a formal mentor-like setting would have made things easier for Beth since she was new to BWH.

On behalf of the PDA I would like to thank Beth for sharing her story and hope that it will help others navigate this beautiful, but challenging, time in their lives.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Women Faculty/Trainee Gathering

A networking event for women faculty across all departments.

January 22 at 4-6 pm
Shapiro First Floor Lounge
More info & registration coming soon

PLC Quarterly Meeting

Are you interested in developing transferrable skills such as leadership, teamwork, and management? The Postdoctoral Leadership Council (PLC) is the governing body that directs the activities of the BWH Postdoctoral Association. Join us at our quarterly meeting to learn about the different activities of the PLC. Lunch will be provided.

January 29 12-1 pm
Location TBA

Career Panel Series

Monthly career panels comprised of BWH alumni who will share their experiences transitioning from postdoc to industry. Topics will include: women in biotech, industry research positions, academia, and non-traditional industry positions. Networking session to follow.

Location and Dates TBA

Career Tuesday Seminar Series

Networking is important, regardless of whichever career path you choose. Join Sabrina Woods in a three-part workshop series entitled, "Building Career Connections."

March 3, April 7, May 5
Location TBA
Registration opening soon

Research Trainee Luncheon

An opportunity to meet with BRI Executive Committee to discuss the needs of the postdoc community. Lunch will be provided.

March 19, 2020 at 12-1 pm
Location TBA
[More info & registration](#)

Call for Nominations: Postdoc Mentoring Award

Nominations for the 2020 Postdoctoral Scholar Award for Excellence in Mentoring will open in the Spring. Two \$1000 travel grants will be awarded to the winners

More info coming soon

MCP End of Year Celebration

Late May, Location and Time TBA

Never miss an event. Subscribe to the postdoc mailing list [here](#).

Career Spotlight: A Day in the Life of an Editor

by Abhijeet Sonawane, Ph.D.

Have you ever wondered what career paths are available to postdocs outside of academia? What do these roles entail, and what skills are necessary to land a job in these positions? We are lucky to have a large network of alumni who are willing to share their experiences with us. Each issue, we interview different alumni to get a glimpse into their career. This month, we feature Sannie Culbertson, Ph.D., an Editor for Trends in Biochemical Sciences.



Abhijeet Sonawane (AS): What is your role in your current job as an editor? What are the major skills required for pursuing a career in academic publishing?

Sannie Culbertson (SC): As Editor for Trends in Biochemical Sciences, I am involved in all aspects of handling manuscripts. I commission articles and accept proposed manuscripts, navigate the peer review process, perform editorial services for authors, and ultimately accept manuscript for publishing.

I have greatly enjoyed my transition from benchwork to editing; not only does it enable me to keep at the forefront of scientific research, but I get to interact with scientists from all over the world. This transition was greatly aided by establishing working relationships with senior managers, as well as many skills learned during my graduate education and postdoctoral experience, including time and project management, organization, and science communication.

AS: What activities during your PhD/postdoc helped launch your career?

SC: The extracurricular activities I participated in during graduate school and as a postdoc provided me with unique experiences that have helped my transition. For example, as a peer mentor for our Graduate Learning Community, I gained leadership and communication skills. At BWH, I joined the Mentoring Circles program where everybody supported goals of each other. I also briefly gained experience editing and writing for the BWH Postdoctoral Association newsletter.

AS: Looking back, what is the one thing you would have changed about your BWH experience?

SC: If I could change an aspect of my experience at BWH, it would have been to get involved in the PDA sooner than I had; the experiences I gained from such organizations has enabled me to meet more people and to gain leadership, communication, and time management skills that I wouldn't have gained just from my research.

AS: What is your message to the graduate and postdoctoral researchers of the BWH/Harvard community? Any final words.

SC: Transitions can be intimidating, but they can also be rewarding.

Thank you, Dr. Culbertson!

...Continued from [page 1](#)

Regarding child-care, public academic institutions lack parental and family benefits, therefore need for paid parental leave policies is an ongoing discussion. Despite all odds, there are certain institutions that offer considerable benefits to encourage postdocs, although with significant variability in full time benefits with respect to postdoc classifications. Through Partners HealthCare, BWH provides [traditional](#) and [back up](#) child-care services, however, one may need to plan and check availability at those centers. BWH also offers [at-home](#) trusted and screened child-care providers for 7-day allotment annually through Care.com. Children's Hospital Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, UC San Diego, Weill Cornell offer robust postdoc benefits and some child-care benefits too. A brief 2019 report and FAQs on postdoctoral benefits can be found [here](#).

Retirement benefits are also approached differently at institutions. For e.g. Postdoctoral fellows at Whitehead Institute at MIT are part of the 401K plans and receive 8% of their salary from the institute as a retirement benefit. BWH offers Partners Employee Assistance Program (1-866-724-4EAP) for work and life resources planning. Postdocs at Brigham could invest in 403(b) Tax-Sheltered Annuity (TSA) Plan or Roth contributions towards retirement savings. International postdocs who are not yet sure about remaining in the U.S can invest in mutual funds as they can be easily transferred abroad with no tax penalty. For more details about monthly benefits at BWH, please visit [Ask myHR](#) or contact benefits team via [email](#) or at 857-307-7077; for retirement opportunities, search "tax sheltered annuity" on [Ask myHR](#)). International postdocs/US citizens who wish to participate in a TSA plan at BWH or have further investment questions could have a free 45 minutes individual consultation with [FIDELITY](#) (1-800-642-7131) or [TIAA](#) (1-800-732-8353).

...Continued from [page 2](#)

What are the requirements for a patentable invention?

United States Patent and Trademark Office ([USPTO](#)) is the federal agency in the U.S. Department of Commerce to issue patents on behalf of the government. The basic requirements for an invention to qualify for a patent eligibility have the following elements: to cover subject matter defined as "new", to have a "utility", to be "non-obvious", and "not disclosed" to the public prior to the application for the patent. There are three categories of patents: utility patents, design patents, and plant patents. The utility patent covers processes, compositions of matter, machines, manufactures and is the most powerful form of protection, but also the most difficult to attain and it will last 20 years from the date of filing. One of the most difficult obstacles in the patent review process is to prove the "non-obviousness" criteria because it is the most subjective. There is a possibility to apply for a design patent at the same time with a utility

Patent types

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Utility patent | A tool, production process, machine, a composition of matter |
| Design patent | Unique visual style – time limit of 14 years |
| Plant patent | Novel, non-obvious, produced through asexual reproduction |

What is the definition of an inventor?

Because inventorship is a legal issue and disagreements about inventorship may arise later, it is fundamentally important to define who contributes to the conception of the ideas in the patent claims of a patent application. So, an inventor is the person or the creators' group who came up with the idea and worked diligently on making the invention.

Start a patenting process

The institution's Licensing Managers, together with patent counsels, will work in close collaboration with the inventor or the inventors' group to evaluate the discovery within the context of what is publicly known about the subject (known as "prior art") in order to approve the draft of the patent application. The patent counsels will request information about inventorship of the application claims and will ask the creators to review the application before it is filed. One of the most important steps is the prosecution of a patent application and it refers to the correspondence between the patent attorney and the Patent Office, in which the counsel, working together with the inventors, will draft responses to the Patent Office's concerns. The prosecution process of the patent application takes three to six years

EDITORIAL TEAM

Deepak Bhere, Ph.D.; Rafik Boudra, Ph.D.; Yashini Govender, Ph.D.; Priyadarshini Kachroo, Ph.D.; Ashley Ogawa-Wong, Ph.D.; Brittani Price, Ph.D.; Guyu Quin, Ph.D.; Abhijeet Sonawane, Ph.D.; Andreea Stancu, Ph.D.; Vanessa Wacleche, Ph.D.; Oana Zelezniuk, Ph.D.

Interested in joining the editorial team or becoming a contributor? Do you have a question, comment, or ideas for our next issue? Let us know!

CONTACT

[Rafik Boudra](#) or [Ashley Ogawa-Wong](#)
Co-Chairs, Communications Committee