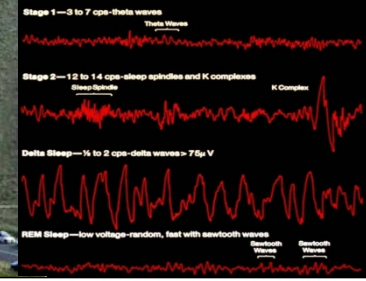
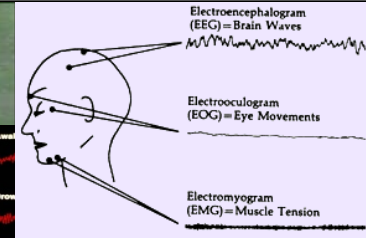


# Establishing an academic career & maintaining a lifestyle



WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

TALL POPPY CAMPAIGN



University of South Australia



Centre for Sleep Research

Siobhan Banks, PhD  
Senior Research Fellow  
Centre for Sleep Research



**70% of PhD students in  
Australia go on to do postdocs -  
But how do you get a postdoc in the first place?**

# A little about me:

- Research area: Sleep
- PhD 2004 Flinders Uni
- Postdoc UPENN 2004-05
- UPENN Faculty 2006-09
- 2009-present UniSA  
fellowship

Hard decision  
about if and when  
to return to  
Australia...



# Talk Outline

- What is a postdoc?
- How do you find a postdoc?
- Getting the most out of your postdoc
- Is postdoc right for me?

# What is a postdoc?

- Need PhD or equivalent (e.g. MD)
- Research and some teaching
- Appointment from 1-5 years
- Supervised by a mentor/advisor
- Prep. for professional/academic career
- **Independent or on someone's grant**

# The good & the bad of postdocs

- Good:
  - Opportunity to develop new, independent research project
  - Form new collaborations
  - Flexibility
  - Travel
- Bad:
  - Low pay if you go to US or Europe
  - Status
  - What next?

# Do YOU need to do a postdoc?

- Determine your ULTIMATE career goal
  - Is a postdoc needed?
- Pitfalls: Postdocs may...
  - Fail to find employment afterwards
  - Receive insufficient mentoring/support
  - Not have enough independence to establish themselves as scientists

# Talk Outline

- What is a postdoc?
- How do you find postdoc openings?
- Getting the most out of your postdoc
- Is postdoc right for me?



# How to find a postdoc

- Biggest resource: networking!!
- Go to lots of meetings, talk with investigators whose research you like
- Ask your colleagues – many jobs are not advertised
- Email potential mentors
- Visit research groups and give talks

# How did I find a position?

- Conference
- Talked to researchers
- Networked a lot
  
- Right place, right time...
  
- Apply and plan early – a year in advance

# How to find a postdoc: Web

- Major funding agency websites:
    - NHMRC
    - ARC
    - ...and others!
  - Professional societies:
    - Websites
    - Meetings
    - Student days at conferences
- Individual university websites

# Things to consider...

- Different fields - will broaden your CV
- New “hot” topics with more funding
- Geography?
  - Australia
  - International
- Your work load will increase!
- Start thinking about your next step – what will you do after the postdoc?

# What to look for in the research environment

- Is this person active in their field?  
(publications, grants, etc)
- What are his/her PhD students, postdocs working on?
- Will this person be a good colleague?
- What is the funding situation?

# Before accepting....

- Is this what you want??
- Consider:
  - Salary
  - Benefits (family coverage? Important in US)
  - Expectations of your research
- Evaluate the institution
- Where do you want to go next?
  - Type of research position, different country etc
- Make sure you will be done with your PhD PRIOR to the starting date

# Talk Outline

- What is a postdoc?
- How do you find postdoc openings?
- **Getting the most out of your postdoc**
- Is postdoc right for me?

# What to expect when you start

- Get a new project up and running QUICKLY
- Different dynamics than PhD students
- Expectations of the new research group
  - Supervise, mentor PhDs and undergrads
  - Manage the lab
  - May have to do dirty work/ long hours



# Make the most of your time!

- Meet, network with range of faculty/colleagues
  - NOT just your mentor(s)!
- Participate in seminars, group research projects
- Publish like mad, especially if you want to apply for independent funding
- *Be a good citizen of the lab and the department.*

# Make the most of your time!

- Go to meetings and more meetings, even if you have to pay for them
- Look for supplemental (funding) opportunities
- TEACH, if you want to become a Lecturer
- Network, network, network
- Be on the look out for other job opportunities

# Talk Outline

- What is a postdoc?
- How do you find postdoc openings?
- Getting the most out of your postdoc
- Is postdoc right for me?

# Is a postdoc right for me?

- Hard work/ long hours
- Develops your career
- independent research while mentored
- Develops networks
- Travel, flexibility
- Not a stable job - a postdoc is not a permanent position (research never really is)
- Have plans and options for next move



Information:

Centre for Sleep Research

<http://www.unisa.edu.au/sleep/>

School Psychology

<http://www.unisa.edu.au/psw/>

**Questions?**