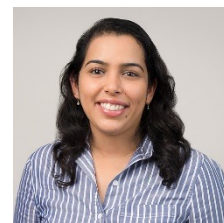


PhD & Postdoc Perspectives...

Dr. Eulalia Coutinho,

Scientist at Crinetics Pharmaceuticals



Can you please walk us through your journey as a scientist, first in academia and now in the private sector? My curiosity and naiveté led me to move to Japan at 21 where I completed my PhD studying the role of ventromedial hypothalamus (VMH)-specific SF-1 neurons in the regulation of glucose metabolism and energy homeostasis. After my PhD, I moved to the University of Otago, New Zealand to study the role of metabolic agouti-related peptide (AgRP) neurons in the regulation of fertility. After a 3-year postdoc in NZ, I decided to move to the University of California San Diego (UCSD) to not only further pursue my interests in the regulation of fertility and learn new skills but also to explore opportunities for career development. At UCSD, I attended multiple workshops, from grant writing to careers outside academia. The latter was really eye-opening and made me realize that a career in industry was more suited to my interests. Last November, I started as a scientist in the Discovery group at Crinetics Pharmaceuticals and now work on rodent disease models to assess potency and efficacy of potential compounds for the treatment of endocrine diseases.

What were the main reasons that motivated you to take an industry job? During my postdoctoral fellowship, I realized that I wanted my research to be translational and lead to therapies that can potentially help patients. Another motivating reason was the ability to stay in San Diego and not have to move again, which would probably have been the case if I pursued an academic career.

What was your experience like, transitioning from being a postdoctoral fellow to your current position? Prior to starting my current position, I completed a certificate course in translational science which covered concepts related to drug discovery. In addition, I had spoken to several industry professionals about their jobs and so, had a good understanding of the expectations of an industry scientist position. Both of these made the transition easier because I had an understanding about the drug discovery process and the scientist role.

What are some of the challenges you have encountered during this transition? What has been most rewarding? The main differences between academia and industry are the pace and priorities. In academia, there is the need and the time to dive deep into the mechanisms underlying an effect or symptom. However, in industry, the priority is to show efficacy and safety. The most rewarding part of my job is the opportunity to contribute to early-stage drug discovery, from researching new targets to first proof of concept studies. Knowing that some of my work will lead to therapies in the future is very fulfilling.

What advice would you give PANS trainees who are planning their next professional move? If you would like to pursue a career in industry directly after completing your PhD, start networking with industry professionals and building your LinkedIn profile in the last 1-2 years of your PhD. Outside the lab, you can get involved with university organizations or local biotech networks. For example, I got involved in the UCSD Postdoc association and volunteered to be the chair of the exposure to industry program. This forced me to go outside my comfort zone and reach out to industry professionals and companies, thus helping to build my LinkedIn network. Networking is key to finding a job in industry! It is never too early to reach out to people and ask them about their experience and their advice. Find out about the different positions in industry and which one might be best suited for you. Connect with people in those positions to learn about their job and get tips about applying to those roles. Industry jobs prefer resumes, so work on that and make it concise while clearly highlighting skills that are required for a job. LinkedIn is a great resource for job seekers, so work on your profile and build your network. Lastly, apply for jobs you are interested in even if you don't meet all the requirements. If you are a good fit for the team, they will hire you and train you. Good luck to you all and feel free to reach out to me on LinkedIn ([Linkedin.com/in/eulalia-c](https://www.linkedin.com/in/eulalia-c)) if you have any questions

This interview was given to Dr. Richard Piet (Kent State University) as an activity of the *Pans Career Development*.