

naturejobs

**THE CAREERS
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Americans of a certain age may remember a popular Saturday morning television programme called *Super Friends*. This cartoon series featured, among other characters, the Wonder Twins. Whenever these two superheroes got into a jam, they touched their knuckles together and unleashed their powers, transforming themselves into other shapes and forms — to the detriment of the bad guy, who they quickly vanquished.

That coupling reminds me of the two largest global foundations that fund postdocs. The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) and the Wellcome Trust each stand alone as powerful, influential organizations, funding some of the best and brightest investigators and postdocs globally. But last week, they metaphorically touched their knuckles together, launching a programme that would allow fellows funded by either programme to spend a year in a lab of their transatlantic allies.

This postdoctoral exchange programme should be a boon to postdocs funded by either organization because it will expose them to potential future collaborators on both sides of the ocean and allow them to learn different skills — furthering interdisciplinary science. They will also get to meet and work with investigators who are not necessarily funded by either foundation. This arrangement broadens career paths for participating postdocs, by making them less beholden to any particular principal investigator or even single laboratory.

But the real test of how 'super' this programme will be is whether other organizations and institutes take up this model. Both the HHMI and the Wellcome Trust have set the pace in postdoc training by raising stipend levels and offering courses beyond scientific skills, such as in lab management. In both cases, many other organizations followed suit. It's likely that, as with the Wonder Twins, the whole will be greater than the sum of their parts, in ways I can't envisage — much as I still can't comprehend how two kids in capes changing into an eagle and a bucket of water can somehow prevail over their nefarious adversaries.

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