

PHARMACEUTICALS

During his 25 years in academia, Robert Lenox turned down several jobs in industry. But now he has taken the plunge and become head of the central-nervous-system disease group at Aventis. Lenox left his endowed professorship at the University of Pennsylvania in part because he recognized a shift in the drug-discovery process. In recent years, he says, pharmaceutical research concentrated more on combinatorial chemistry. But now rational drug design is in vogue because “you can find mechanisms that are critical to the disease process”, he says.

Throughout his academic career, Lenox was fascinated by the molecular mechanisms that underlie complex behavioural conditions such as bipolar disorder. He always thought that, at some point, he would like to be in a position to help search for better treatments for these conditions.

Lenox had anticipated some cultural differences as a result of his move — more resources, but less individual autonomy — but he now realizes that autonomy can also mean little or no collaboration. Since joining Aventis, he has been impressed at the extent to which his new colleagues cooperate on multiple projects. “What particularly struck me is that the scientists with whom I deal really do want to make an impact,” Lenox says. “They want to discover drugs that can make a difference.”

BIOTECHNOLOGY

Andrew Webb, who left Amersham Biosciences in England last month to become sales and marketing director for DxS, a biotech start-up based in Manchester, UK, has travelled a merger-filled path from bench to sales, and from pharmaceuticals to biotech. “You get quite relaxed about it after a while,” he says. “Each time I’ve fallen on my feet.” After university, Webb worked in drug metabolism with SmithKline & French, but took voluntary redundancy when the company closed its preclinical operations in 1989. He joined Beecham Pharmaceuticals and, ironically, six months after he left SmithKline, the company merged with Beecham and he found himself working for the same people again.

Lenox later joined Amersham International’s life sciences division in a technical support position, and after the business merged with Pharmacia Biotech, became UK industry sales director and eventually European sales director. He is pleased that his new position with DxS will encompass many of the roles he has had in what he

describes as six jobs in 11 years, but jokes that he has left his quest for stability behind. “Amersham Biosciences is about as secure a position I could’ve had,” he says.

After 25 years with Bristol-Myers Squibb, Michael Howerton this autumn joined ImClone Systems, a New York-based biotech company, as vice-president, business development. Howerton will oversee licensing arrangements and product acquisitions. At his previous company, he served as vice-president, financial analysis and assistant controller, having spent the previous eight years as vice-president of corporate development, a role similar to his present one at ImClone.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

This month, Danny Powell became executive director of the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Powell most recently served as associate director of the Los Alamos Computer Science Institute and as the associate director for the Center for High Performance Software Research at Rice University. Powell will manage the day-to-day operations of the NCSA and work to link it with the National Computational Science Alliance. Powell succeeds Jim Bottum, who left the NCSA in the summer to become vice-president for information technology and chief information officer at Purdue University in Indiana.

PHYSICS

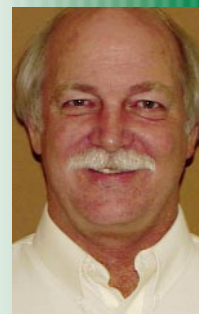
Peter Knight, who recently became head of the physics department at Imperial College in London, was appointed vice-president of the Optical Society of America (OSA) last month. This is the first time someone living outside North America has held the position. Although the OSA’s headquarters are in Washington, Knight points out that a third of the society’s 14,000 members work outside the United States, and that its premier journal, *Optics Letters*, currently publishes more papers by Europeans than Americans. Knight will serve as vice-president next year, president-elect in 2003 and president in 2004.

ERRATUM

In Movers in the 18 October issue of *NatureJobs*, John Kelly is incorrectly described as overseeing a \$350 million annual research programme. He will in fact oversee a \$350 million development of a new research site for the University of California, San Francisco, at Mission Bay.



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Peter Knight

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