Contacts

Publisher: Fabien Savenay
Editor: Paul Smaglik
Sales Director: Ben Crowe

European Head Office, London

The Macmillan Building
4 Crinan Street
London N1 9XW, UK
Tel +44 (0) 20 7843 4961
Fax +44 (0) 20 7843 4996
e-mail: naturejobs@nature.com

European Manager:
Nevin Bayoumi (4978)

UK/ RoW/ Ireland:

Matt Powell (4953)
Andy Douglas (4975)
Laura Pearson (4977)

Netherlands/ Italy/ Iberia:

Evelina Rubio Hakansson (4973)
Scandinavia: Silke Opstrup (4994)

Production Manager:

Billie Franklin
To send materials use London
address above.
Tel +44 (0) 20 7843 4814
Fax +44 (0) 20 7843 4996
e-mail: naturejobs@nature.com

International

Advertising Coordinator:
Hind Berrada (4935)

Naturejobs web development:
Tom Hancock

Naturejobs online production:
Ben Lund

European Satellite Offices

France/ Belgium:

Christine Niox-Chateau
Tel +33 (0) 1 43 20 16 51
Fax +33 (0) 1 43 20 51 52
e-mail: c.nioxchateau@nature.com

Germany/ Austria/ Switzerland:

Patrick Phelan/ Kate Turner
Tel +49 89 54 90 57 11/-2
Fax +49 89 54 90 57 20
e-mails: p.phelan@nature.com
k.turner@nature.com

US Head Office, New York

345 Park Avenue South,
10th Floor, New York, NY 10010-1707
Tel +1 800 989 7718
Fax +1 800 989 7103
e-mail: naturejobs@natureny.com

US Sales Director:

Ben Crowe

US Sales Manager:

Peyton Mason

US Advertising Coordinator:

Ashly de Leon

Japan Head Office, Tokyo

MG Ichigaya Building (5F),
19-1 Harakutamachi,
Shinjuku-ku,
Tokyo 162-0841
Tel +81 3 3267 8751
Fax +81 3 3267 8746
e-mail: k.cowan@naturejp.com
Japan Manager: Kate Cowan

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Going into industry?

Although academic life scientists are aware of industrial opportunities, they are also wary of them. So says a recent poll on the perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of working in the pharmaceutical industry, conducted by the Science Advisory Board, an online forum of researchers in the life and medical sciences.

Of the 778 respondents, about a third cited an inflexible corporate culture or the inability to set their own research priorities as the main drawbacks of a career in the pharmaceutical industry. Another 19% mentioned restrictions on publication as the main disadvantage.

But the respondents were also aware of the advantages of industry. They noted that companies offer a team-oriented environment with multiple career paths. Also mentioned was the fact that companies often have better research facilities, with equipment that can increase research productivity.

These pros and cons are echoed by postdocs working in industrial laboratories (see page 5). But their stories also show that policies on research autonomy and publication vary widely from company to company.

All this adds up to a lesson in preparation. Anyone — postdoc or otherwise — considering industrial employment would be well advised to investigate their potential employer's publication record, talk to former and current employees and ask pointed questions about research autonomy. Then, a decision to join a company can be made with confidence rather than caution.

Paul Smaglik
Naturejobs editor

Contents

POSTDOCS & STUDENTSHIPS

Choosing a good company p5

MOVERS

English cancer researcher leaves
NIH to head Scottish lab;
British astronomer leaves
Canada for Switzerland; and
more [Back page](#)

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