- FOCUS
- SPOTLIGHT
- RECRUITMENT
- ANNOUNCEMENTS
- EVENTS

naturejobs

A tangential route to success

Sometimes tangents can lead to promising new science, as well as fresh career opportunities. That's the lesson learned by Renos Savva, this year's winner of London First's Young Biotechnology Entrepreneur Award, announced last week.

When Savva was doing his PhD at University College London, he was mostly concerned with how cells repair their DNA after it becomes damaged. But when he joined a research group around the corner at Birkbeck College in 1999, his colleagues directed his attention towards structural biology — a step away from the linear world of genetics and genomics into the three-dimensional domain of proteomics.

At the time, the group was developing technology to clone and express proteins. Traditional methods emphasized bioinformatics to guess how differences in sequences could result in different protein shapes and folds. But Savva and his colleagues felt that the approach was incomplete, because it was only educated guesswork. So they found a way to randomly sample the genome — using damaged DNA, Savva's speciality —

and then clone a library of proteins that would better represent these changes.

The work had only "tenuous links" to Savva's PhD work, he says, but he nevertheless was prepared to take the plunge and follow in the footsteps of his father, also an entrepreneur. After the university helped the group obtain patent protection, the researchers spun out a company, struggled for seed money, then searched for clients. Now Savva splits his time between being research director of the company Domainex and as a research director at Birkbeck.

Savva's experience shows that left turns can lead to profitable places. But he says that tangents alone are not enough. Scientists who want to enter business also need to be comfortable with risks, and to have infrastructure in place to turn academic ideas into business opportunities.

Paul Smaglik, Naturejobs editor

CONTACTS

Publisher: Ben Crowe
Editor: Paul Smaglik
Marketing Manager: David Bowen

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 Manager/Corporations:
 Peter Bless
 Classified Sales Representatives
 Tel: +1 800 989 7718

**New York/Pennsylvania/
 Latin America:** Kelly Roman
**Midwest USA/Maryland/
 NIH:** Wade Tucker
East USA/Canada:
 Janine Taormina

San Francisco Office
Classified Sales Representative:
 Michaela Bjorkman
 225 Bush Street, Suite 1453
 San Francisco, CA 94104
 Tel: +1 415 781 3803
 Fax: +1 415 781 3805
 e-mail: m.bjorkman@naturesf.com

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

Naturejobs Sales Director: Nevin Bayoumi (4978)
European Sales Manager: Andy Douglas (4975)

Advertising Production Manager: Billie Franklin
 To send materials use London address above.
 Tel: +44 (0) 20 7843 4814
 Fax: +44 (0) 20 7843 4815
 e-mail: naturejobs@nature.com

Naturejobs web development: Tom Hancock
Naturejobs online production: Niamh Shields

European Satellite Office
 Patrick Phelan
 e-mail: p.phelan@nature.com

Japan Head Office, Tokyo
 Chiyoda Building,
 2-37 Ichigayatamachi,
 Shinjuku-ku,
 Tokyo 162-0843
 Tel: +81 3 3267 8751
 Fax: +81 3 3267 8746
Asia-Pacific Sales Director: Rinoko Asami
 e-mail: rasami@naturejpn.com