

## **Conversations with Scientists 2017:** **Fellowships and Funding** <sup>[1]</sup>

Enviado por Anonymous (no verificado) el 31 octubre 2017 - 11:42pm



## *Fellowships & Funding*

During this conversation, scientists in research careers and funding experts talked about their experiences applying for fellowships and grants, and getting funded, as well as shared practical advice and strategies that can help students be successful in the process of securing funding.

## ***Panelists***

**Dr. Mariano A. Garcia-Blanco** was born in Puerto Rico, went to Harvard College for his undergraduate education, and received his MD, and PhD in Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry from Yale University. He completed a fellowship with Dr. Phillip Sharp at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. From 1990 to 2014 Dr. Garcia-Blanco was a faculty member at Duke University, was the inaugural Charles D. Watts Professor of Molecular Genetics and Microbiology, Professor of Medicine, and Director of the Center for RNA Biology. Since 2014 he is Professor and Chair of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, and the Mildred Hajek Vacek and John Roman Vacek Distinguished Chair in Honor of President Truman G. Blocker, Jr. at The University of Texas Medical Branch. He also is Professor of Emerging Infectious Diseases at Duke-NUS Medical School, Singapore.

Dr. Garcia-Blanco has made seminal discoveries to RNA biology and virology. His studies on mRNA splicing have shed light on the mechanisms of splicing regulation, disease-causing of splicing dis-regulation and a new type of RNA therapy. Recently, he has focused his expertise on pathogenic RNA viruses and on RNA-centric mechanisms of immunity. The RNA viruses he studies cause dengue, yellow fever and Zika, which threaten global public health. His studies in immunity have centered on the role of RNA binding proteins on innate immunity, inflammation and autoimmunity. He has published over 170 articles, reviews and chapters, and has been funded by NIH since 1991.

Dr. Garcia-Blanco was a Sackler Foundation Scholar, was elected to the Association of American Physicians (2011), fellow of the AAAS (2011), and fellow of the American Academy of Microbiology (2013). He has served in editorial boards and NIH panels, including the National Advisory Council for NIGMS, and the Council of Scientific Advisers of the International Centre Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology.

**Dr. Paola Giusti Rodríguez** is a Research Assistant Professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she is using functional genomics and genetics approaches to gain mechanistic insight onto schizophrenia and other psychiatric disorders. For this work, she was recently awarded a K01 Mentored Research Scientist Development Award by the National Institute of Mental Health. Since joining UNC as a postdoctoral researcher in 2012, Paola has served as a leader and co-chair (from 2013-2014) of the Postdoctoral Association. Before coming to UNC for her postdoctoral position, Paola was a Christine Mirzayan Science and Technology policy fellow at the National Academies, where she worked on policy issues related to diversity and equity in education and the competitiveness of higher education institutions. Paola grew up in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where she earned a BS in biology at the University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras. She also did summer research internships at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor and the California Institute of Technology. In April 2011, Paola completed her PhD in cell and developmental biology at Harvard University (and MIT), where her doctorate research focused on studying the molecular basis of neurodegeneration and synaptic plasticity using mouse models. Since 2013, Paola has been working with Ciencia Puerto Rico (CienciaPR; [cienciapr.org](http://cienciapr.org) [2]), a non-profit volunteer-based organization that connects the Puerto Rican scientific community and

seeks to broaden Latinos' engagement with science through education, careers in STEM disciplines, and the development of science endeavors in Puerto Rico.

**Dr. Michelle D. Jones-London** serves as Chief, Office of Programs to Enhance Neuroscience Workforce Diversity (OPEN-WD). In this position, she plays a critical role in guiding the Institute's diversity efforts and chairs the NINDS Diversity Working Group. Dr. Jones-London joined NINDS as a Program Director in July, 2006. Dr. Jones-London earned her Ph.D. in Neuroscience from the Department of Neuroscience and Anatomy at Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine. She then received postdoctoral training as a research fellow at University of Pennsylvania in the Department of Psychiatry. Dr. Jones-London came to the NIH in July 2004 as an Emerging Leader Fellow; she performed duties across the Department of Health and Human Services including the Center for Scientific Review, FDA Office of Women's Health Science Program, and the Immediate Office of the Secretary, Intergovernmental/Tribal Affairs Office. Dr. Jones-London directs the diversity training and workforce development programs at NINDS which include Diversity and Re-Entry Supplements, Predoctoral Fellowships to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research (F31), Career Development Awards to Promote Diversity (K01) and Diversity Research Education Grants (R25) (including the Neuroscience Scholars Program with SfN). She also provides oversight for the Institute's diversity outreach initiatives at several other national scientific conferences. Her trans-NIH efforts include oversight for the NIH Blueprint ENDURE program and Project Scientist for the NIH National Research Mentoring Network (NRMN). Her research interests have focused on understanding monoaminergic neurotransmitter regulation and mechanisms of behavioral psychopharmacology in animal models of disorders such as ADHD, Tourette Syndrome, and depression.

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