

Establishing a career in science: the early postdoctoral years

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So you are midway through your PhD and are (hopefully) thinking about the direction of your scientific career. Just like a game of Snakes and Ladders, there are moves that can fast-track your scientific development and others that can impede your productivity. There are many options and considerations when deciding your next step(s). Some of the major questions that may confront you and require some considerations include (but not limited to):

- Finding a supervisor. This is where you first decide what you want to do scientifically and then use the knowledge of you PhD supervisor and colleagues to find an appropriate lab and make contact with the proposed supervisor.
- The location of the fellowship. One must weigh up the benefits of staying in the current laboratory or moving to another lab. For example, is a move overseas essential for future success in the scientific landscape?
- Determining where to obtain funding for fellowship support. This may be from major granting bodies such as the NHMRC and ARC to specialist agencies.
- Finding an appropriate laboratory. One must consider the benefits of a larger well resourced lab versus a small lab with less funds. Another vital consideration is the potential 'access' to the proposed supervisor and the mentorship that you will receive.

After finding your lab and settling into post-doc life there are new challenges and considerations. These include when to broaden your horizons and move on, how to gain independence without negatively influencing your relationship with your current supervisor, to be aware of funding pitfalls (e.g. rules pertaining to the new investigator grants with the NHMRC) and finally, how to establish collaborations. Being aware of these issues and addressing them are important as you move from PhD to post-doc and beyond!