

Yung S. Lie, PhD

Scientific Director
Damon Runyon Cancer Research
Foundation

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About the Foundation

- **Mission:** To accelerate breakthroughs, the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation provides today's best young scientists with funding to pursue innovative cancer research.
- Founded in 1946, the Foundation has invested \$230 million in over 3,300 scientists

About the Foundation

3 award programs (\$10M annual budget)

- Fellowship Award

- » Supports postdoctoral scientists conducting basic and translational cancer research

- Clinical Investigator Award

- » Supports early career physician-scientists conducting patient-oriented research

- Innovation Award

- » Supports the next generation of exceptionally creative thinkers with “high-risk/high-reward” ideas

120 scientists currently funded

About the Foundation

- Staff size = 15
 - Award programs group = 4
 - (2 Director level, 2 assistants)
- Report directly to Executive Director

- Board of Directors = 28 members
 - Scientific Committee = 11 members

- External Scientific Committees = 3
 - (one for each award program)

The role of the Scientific Director

- Oversee the Foundation's grant programs:
 - Work with the Scientific Committee of the Board of Directors and award selection committees, including attendance at all meetings.
 - Oversee the application and review processes.
 - Read and approve all annual progress reports from awardees.
 - Perform evaluations of programs to ensure their continued quality, relevancy and effectiveness.
 - Strategic planning, program development and implementation.
- Identify and report on scientific discoveries by current and former award recipients, including their impact on cancer.
- Write/edit scientific copy for the Foundation's annual report, newsletters, website and other communications.
- Plan and coordinate the Foundation's annual postdoctoral retreat and other scientific symposia.

The role of the Scientific Director

- Follow current trends in basic and clinical research related to cancer and keep the Board and staff apprised of new developments. Attend annual national cancer meetings. Stay abreast of the biomedical research landscape and issues faced by early career investigators.
- Contribute to research funding policy through interaction with peers in the science funding community, policy makers and scientific leaders.
- Participate in fundraising and other events/activities designed to promote awareness about the Foundation.
- Work with fundraising staff to develop proposals in specific areas of interest to donors or industry sponsors. Oversee communications by award recipients with donors.
- Handle requests from donors about research supported by the Foundation and medical referrals.

Skills carried over from the bench

- Multitasking, managing complex projects and knowing how to prioritize
- Accustomed to high level of planning and organization
- Understanding basic science and how it applies to understanding disease
- Communication skills: ability to interact with both scientists and non-scientists (written and oral)

My career path

- **PhD** in Biological Sciences (Stanford University, 2000)
- **Product Marketing** at start-up company developing electronic lab notebook software (2000)
- **Consultant** at Celera annotating the Human Genome (2000-2001)
- **Postdoctoral research** in neurobiology (UCSF and The Rockefeller University, 2001-2007)
- **Scientific Director** at Damon Runyon Foundation since 2008

Deciding to leave academia

- **Step 1 (and the hardest part):** realizing and coming to terms with the fact that you are not happy at the bench
- Next steps:
 - Talk to your PI, if possible, or other mentors
 - If you still want to do continue in a science-related field, create a list of the pros and cons of academic research

Now what?

- Gather information about other careers
 - Attend career symposia
 - Networking: attend events, get contact information, and always follow up
 - Informational interviews (phone or in person)
- Define the characteristics of your ideal job
- Write a great resume

Criteria to consider

- Preferred work environment (overall staff size, number of scientists on staff, management responsibilities, dress code)
- Newly-created position vs. established position (reporting structure, mentorship)
- Job responsibilities: writing, fundraising, administrative duties, interfacing with scientists vs. non-scientists
- Work hours
- Travel requirements
- Salary expectations

Some good resources

- Put Your Science to Work: The Take-Charge Career Guide for Scientists by Peter S. Fiske, PhD
- *Science Careers* articles
- Your institution's career development office
- LinkedIn groups
- Personal contacts and more networking

Why to choose a career in the non-profit sector

- Use your scientific background to have a broader impact
 - Disease relevance
 - Funding policy
 - Career issues for scientists
 - Communication and awareness
- Opportunity to remain connected to the scientific community

Where to look for non-profit jobs

- Examples of job titles for scientists: Scientific Director, Program Officer, Grants Manager, Project Manager/Coordinator
- Websites to use:
 - *Science Careers*
 - *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*
 - Foundation Center
 - Specific foundations' websites
 - GuideStar

Any questions?