



## NeuroAIDS: A Tango of HIV and Host



The RISE Program seminars got off to an excellent start in 2012 with the presentation *NeuroAIDS: A Tango of HIV and Host* by Dr. Shilpa Buch, Professor and Vice Chair for Research, Department of

Pharmacology and Experimental Neuroscience, University of Nebraska Medical Center. Dr. Buch is an internationally recognized scientist in the field of NeuroAIDS with a long list of publications and invitations to speak across the U.S. and around the world. Her January 25 seminar at PSMHS drew a good sized local crowd that was bolstered by more than a dozen scientists who came from the San Juan/metropolitan area.

Dr. Buch opened her talk by presenting the dramatic changes in HIV infection and NeuroAIDS since the implementation of combined antiretroviral therapy. She then provided highlights of her work spanning the past decade in HIV pathogenesis in the brain with greater detail of her current work focused on the pathways responsible for the exacerbation of HIV neurotoxicity by drug abuse. Among the interesting findings was a clear demonstration of how cocaine, working through the sigma receptor, strongly enhances leukocyte adhesion and migration to the brain. This finding offers some mechanistic insights to explain why drug abuse is a risk for worsened neuropathology during HIV-1 infection.



Throughout her seminar, Dr. Buch emphasized important details needed to publish her work in the best journals – such as proving a finding through several

different experiments. This reinforced an important lesson to both students and mentors in the audience. Following her presentation, Dr. Buch shared lunch and a discussion with the RISE trainees. She also met with several PSMHS investigators and other students, including Lilith Torres, a graduate student in Dr. Richard Noel's lab and a RISE student-mentor, on whose thesis committee Dr. Buch is a member.

We thank Dr. Buch for her visit and seminar which made a positive impact on our science at PSMHS and in Puerto Rico.

## New Year's Resolutions and Solutions

By Dora Farkas, PhD, Founder, PhDNet, retrieved from [www.gradshare.com](http://www.gradshare.com) on Jan 17, 2012

Did you ever make a New Year's Resolution, thinking that a year would be plenty of time to reach your goal, and then find yourself making the same resolution a year later? The three primary reasons that many resolutions do not become reality are 1) lack of clarity about your goals, 2) lack of a plan of how you will achieve your goals, and 3) not following through with your plan.



As an example, let's take one of the favorite resolutions for graduate students: "I will graduate next year." Did you ever meet graduate students who said that year after year? I know I have, and every year I was a little saddened that they were still in school. As a former graduate student, I know how challenging it is to finish your thesis. There were times when I thought I would never finish and, honestly, I did not even know what I needed to do to graduate. I had collected a lot of data, but I could not make a coherent research study out of it.

The turning point of my graduate school experience came one day, when I had an epiphany. All of a sudden, I had an image in my mind with the Table of Contents for my thesis. I did not have data for all the sections, but I now had a vision for what my thesis would be about. Finally, after many years of trying to bring my data together, I had a story to tell. Not all the pieces of the puzzle were there, but I knew what was missing. On this day, I completed the first part of a resolution: setting a clear goal. I knew what I needed to do to finish. (Some minor changes had to be made after discussing it with my advisor, but the basic blueprint was there).

If your goal is to lose weight, to make more money, or to spend more time with your family, how specific are you? How much weight do you want to lose? How much more money do you want to make? How much more time do you want to spend with your family? The more specific you are, the more likely it is that your dreams will become reality.

The second part of turning a dream into reality is to develop a plan. In the case of my thesis, I worked out this part with my supervisor. There was still a large chunk of my thesis missing, and I had to learn new skills to acquire the necessary data. Furthermore, I set milestones and deadlines for many smaller goals.

### Smart Goals

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Time-bound

Finally, it is essential to have the perseverance to follow through. Although I had a plan, obstacles came my way nearly every day. Experiments did not turn out the way we wanted them to, reagents were backordered, machines broke down, and computers crashed (yep, I lost an entire chapter of my thesis and the automatic backup system did not work either- I had to retype it!). Yet, every day (the key here is every day), I made an effort, a small dent in finishing my thesis. Many days you will not feel like working on your goal. But, if you commit to 15 minutes a day, you will find that by the end of the 15 minutes you will be motivated to keep working. This is especially a great technique for overcoming writing blocks.

Need some discipline to follow through? Support groups for thesis writing, weight loss, and exercises are probably the best way to get a little inspiration every week. It is hard to slack off when others check in with you every week or multiple times a week. Now, think about the goal that you would like to become a reality in one year. If you had a clear plan of action, and committed time to this goal every day for a year, where do you think you would be by the end of 2012? What about 2013?

*Grad Currents is a weekly blog with inspiring stories and online tools to help graduate students complete their dissertations, find financial support, and build their careers. Dora Farkas received her PhD from MIT, and founded PhDNet, a growing community for graduate students. To browse her book and free newsletters, visit [www.phdnet.org](http://www.phdnet.org).*

- *A goal without a plan is just a wish. (Antoine de Saint-Exupery)*
- *Arriving at one goal is the starting point to another. (John Dewey)*
- *Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goal. (Henry Ford)*
- *The tragedy of life doesn't lie in not reaching your goal; it lies in having no goal to reach. (Benjamin Mays)*
- *When it is obvious that the goal cannot be reached, do not adjust the goals; adjust the actions steps. (Confucius)*

## CALENDAR

**2/1/12:** Application deadline for summer courses at Marine Biological Laboratory, Woodshole, MI

**2/1/12:** Abstract submission and travel award deadline for American Society for Virology annual meeting July 21-25 in Madison, Wisconsin

**2/3/12:** RISE Professional development activity- Portfolio reviews

**2/6/12:** Abstract submission deadline for the Endocrine Society's Annual Meeting in Houston TX in June 23-26, 2012

**2/9/12:** Special workshop on *Understanding genetic admixture and its implications for complex diseases* at UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center

**2/10/12:** Abstract submission deadline for International Behavioral Neuroscience Society Annual Meeting on June 5-10, 2012 in Hawaii

**2/16/12:** Application deadline for R36 Dissertation Support

**2/16-2/20/12:** AAAS Annual Meeting, Vancouver, B.C.

**2/16-2/17/12:** PSMHS RISE Program IAC/EAC Annual site visit and Meeting

**2/17/12:** Abstract submission deadline to the Society for Gynecologic Investigation Annual scientific meeting in San Diego, CA on March 21-24, 2012

**2/23/12:** Early registration deadline for Experimental Biology meeting in San Diego, CA on April 21-25, 2012

**2/24/12:** RISE journal club

**2/23-2/24/12:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Multidisciplinary Conference and 3<sup>rd</sup> summit of Translational Research in Health Disparities, San Juan, PR

**2/27/12:** Application deadline to Cancer Prevention Research Training Program at MD Anderson Cancer Center

**3/1/12:** Abstract submission deadline for 11th International Symposium on NeuroVirology in New York, NY on May 29-June 2, 2012

**3/2/12:** Puerto Rico Physiological Society 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting, Ponce Hilton Hotel

**3/10/12:** ACS & PRLSAMP JTM/PRISM 2012, UPR Carolina

**3/16/12:** RISE journal Club

**3/21/12:** RISE Professional development activity

**3/28/12:** RISE Seminar

**4/13/12:** Registration deadline for Short Course on Experimental Targeting of the Metabolic Syndrome (July 16 - 26, 2012) at Vanderbilt University

## Time Management Tips



By Susan Ward, About.com Guide. Presented by Jose A. Soto, M.Ed, LPC on 1/13/12 for the MBRS-RISE Professional development seminar series

Do you feel the need to be more organized and/or more productive? Do you spend your day in a frenzy of activity and then wonder why you haven't accomplished much? Time management skills are especially important for graduate students, who often find themselves performing different tasks during the course of a single day. These time management tips will help you increase your productivity and stay cool and collected.

- 1) Realize that time management is a myth.** No matter how organized we are, there are always only 24 hours in a day. Time doesn't change. All we can actually manage is ourselves and what we do with the time that we have.
- 2) Find out where you're wasting time.** Many of us are prey to time-wasters that steal time we could be using much more productively. What are your time-thieves? Do you spend too much time on the internet (facebook, blogs, etc.), reading email, or making personal calls? Tracking your daily activities can help you form an accurate picture of what you actually do, the first step to effective time management.
- 3) Create time management goals.** Remember, the focus of time management is actually changing your behaviors, not changing time. A good place to start is by eliminating your personal time-wasters. For one week, for example, set a goal that you're not going to take personal phone calls while you're working, or check Facebook while you're writing.



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- 4) Implement a time management plan.** Think of this as an extension of time management tip # 3. The objective is to change your behaviors over time to achieve whatever general goal you've set for yourself, such as increasing your productivity or decreasing your stress. So you need to not only set your specific goals, but track them over time to see whether or not you're accomplishing them.
- 5) Use time management tools and organize your systems.** Whether it's a notebook or electronic agenda, the first step to physically managing your time is to know where it's going now and planning how you're going to spend your time in the future. Electronic (software) programs such as Outlook, for instance, let you schedule events easily and set reminders in advance, making your time management easier. Are you wasting a lot of time looking for files on your computer? Take the time to organize a file management system. Is your filing system slowing you down? Redo it, so it's organized to the point that you can quickly lay your hands on what you need.
- 6) Prioritize ruthlessly and learn to delegate.** You should start each day with a time management session prioritizing the tasks for that day and setting your performance benchmark. If you have 20 tasks for a given day, how many of them do you truly need to accomplish? Classify daily tasks according to urgency and importance. There's no need for you to be a one-person show. For effective time management, you need to let other people carry some of the load, especially the smaller, less important or easier tasks (task that do not yield the greatest results). Although delegating does not mean ridding of responsibility, you can decide which things to delegate so that you can be more productive overall.
- 7) Establish routines, set time limits and stick to them as much as possible.** While crises will arise, you'll be much more productive if you can follow routines most of the time. Get in the habit of setting time limits for tasks. For instance, reading and answering email can consume your whole day if you let it. Instead, set a limit of one hour a day for this task and stick to it.

**8) Don't waste time waiting.** From meetings to medical appointments, it's impossible to avoid waiting for someone or something. But you don't need to just sit there watch time pass by. Always take something to do with you, such as an article you need to read, a handout you need to study, or just a blank pad of paper that you can use to help organize your thoughts or to-do list. Technology makes it easy to work wherever you are; your laptop and/or cell phone will help you stay connected.

You can be in control and accomplish what you want to accomplish - once you've come to grips with the time management myth and taken control of your time.

## Student News... Have you heard?

★ Congratulations to graduate student **Maricarmen Colon** (former-RISE) and the members of Dr. Idhaliz Flores' laboratory (**Abigail Ruiz/RISE**, **Perla Baez/former-RISE**) for the recent publication of their paper *HDAC1 and HDAC2 are Differentially Expressed in Endometriosis* in the Journal of Reproductive Sciences.

★ **Marielly Cuevas** (2011 Ph.D. graduate of Dr. Caroline Appleyard's lab) and the members of PSMHS neuroscience and endometriosis labs are also celebrating the recent publication of their paper *Stress exacerbates endometriosis manifestations and inflammatory parameters in an animal model* in the Journal of Reproductive Sciences.

★ Graduate students **Fabian Vazquez** (RISE/Dr. Vanessa Rivera's lab) and **Gladys Chompre** (former-RISE/Dr. Richard Noel's lab) received a partial Young Investigator Travel Award to attend the Society on NeuroImmune Pharmacology 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Scientific Meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii on April 24-28, 2012. Both students will be presenting posters on their research.

★ **Viviana Vazquez** of Dr. Pedro Santiago's lab also received a travel award from the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (funded by NIH/NIGMS FASEB/MARC) to attend the Experimental Biology 2012 scientific meeting in San Diego, California on April 21-25, 2012.



**Congratulations to all on a job well done. Keep up the great work!**