



AAS

Association for
Academic Surgery

Finding your Research Path: What, Where, How

Ulka Sachdev, MD

Associate Professor of Surgery

Site Chief Vascular Surgery, Magee Women's Hospital

University of Pittsburgh Medical Center

Pittsburgh, PA

Early Career Development Course

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Disclosures

- None
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My Path

- Oberlin College, Ohio
 - Neuroscience/Women’s Studies Major
 - Development of research questions
 - Each “answer” leads to more questions
 - Emphasis on PROCESS
- Mount Sinai Medical School
- Mount Sinai Hospital – General Surgery
- Rockefeller University – Research Fellowship
- Mount Sinai Hospital – Vascular Surgery Fellowship
- University of Pittsburgh Medical Center – my first (and only) academic/clinical job

Mount Sinai Hospital – General Surgery

- **Rockefeller University – Research Fellowship**
- 2 years
- **PROCESS**
 - There is no shortcut
 - But there is no substitute for vision
 - Was not clinically active at the time
- Didn't publish a d*#% thing ☹️
- Big problem....this is what I wanted to do

2000, 2001, 2002



9/11



2000, 2001, 2002



9/11



Life and Death Happen

Models in research often don't work

My Path

- University of Pittsburgh Medical Center
 - Protected research time
 - Busy clinical practice
 - The right environment
 - Mentorship (Dr. Tzeng)
 - Access to resources
 - Dedication from leadership to academic pursuits in surgery (Drs. Billiar and Makaroun)

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- *There is tremendous value AND PRECEDENT for being a person who walks the line between research and clinical care*
- *Surgical innovation has ALWAYS involved research*
- *Our ability to innovate, create, and accumulate data creates a huge advantage to pursue meaningful research that changes lives*

The conflict...

- Medicine advances through the process of research
- Funding is at an all time low (getting better)
- Competition with people who do not have clinical responsibilities
- Clinical productivity appears to be of greater value
- Reimbursements for clinical activity are diminishing, thus pressures are even more intense

Persistence in the Face of Failure Pays Off

- Wylie Scholar Award (Vascular Cures 2008)
- Competitive Medical Research Fund
- Clinical and Translational Scientist Institute
- National Institutes of Health K08
- SVS/ACS Mentored Clinical Scientist Award
- R01
- Opportunity
 - To hire help
 - to mentor students and residents
 - to travel and present
 - to collaborate within and across disciplines
 - *To contribute to the academic pursuit of the institution, which promotes recruitment of patients and of talent*
 - *To potentially contribute to medical treatment of vascular disease*

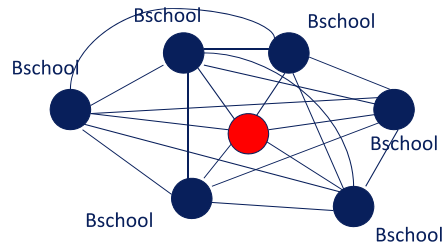
What a junior faculty member can do

- Negotiate dedicated research time and help—
ENVIRONMENT MATTERS
- Seek collaborators (mentors, other specialties, PhDs, residents, medical students, college students)
- Build a network
- Identify grants for junior faculty
- “Persistence is key”

Networks

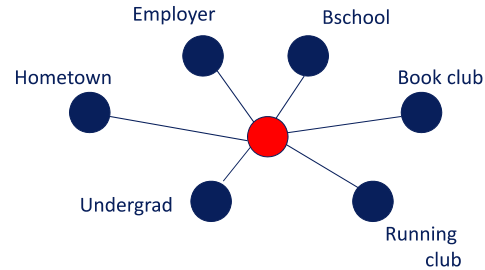
- BIG concept in business
- Not emphasized in medicine
- Benefits:
 - Exposure to more diverse resources
 - Greater visibility
 - Career development
 - Promotions and money
- Risks:
 - Requires commitment

A Look at the Extremes



Actors are more closely
and intensely tied to
one another
"strong ties"

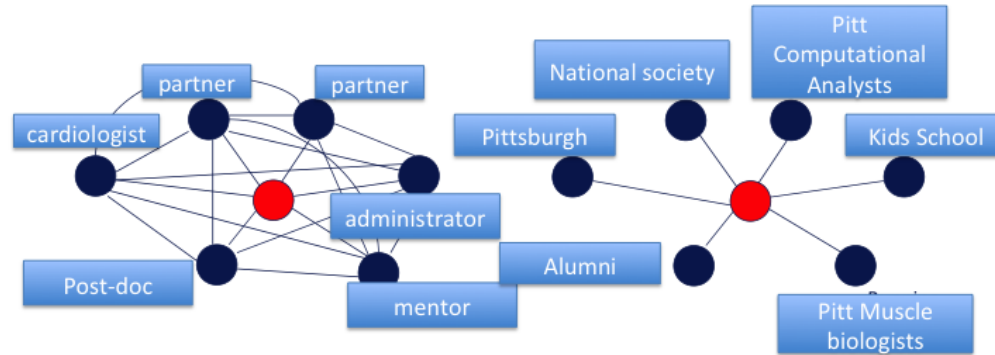
Closed Network



Actors are loosely
connected; hub of
acquaintances
"weak ties"

Open Network

A Look at the Extremes



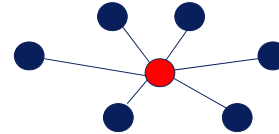
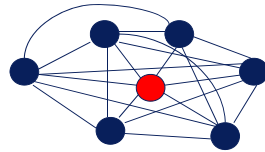
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Networks & Accessing Info on Job Leads



56% of jobs found through personal connections

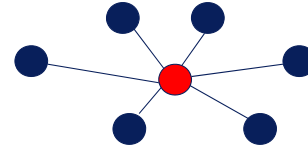
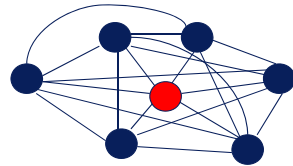
____ %

17% of contacts were good friends via **Closed Networks**

____ %

83% through occasional or rare contacts via **Open Networks**

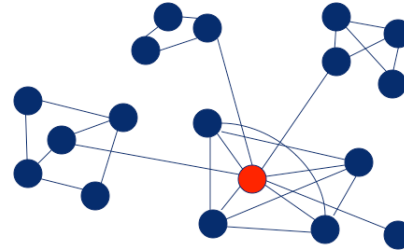
Who Do You Want To Be?



Rainmaker Network

*Combines the benefits of Open
and Closed networks.*

*About the structure,
Not size.*



Smaller Grants for Junior Faculty

- Generally good for those who are within five years of completing training
- Usually around 25-50K/year for one to two years
- Institution (Pitt as an example)
 - **Competitive Medical Research Fund**
 - **Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI)**
 - supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) program, grant UL1 TR001857
 - CTSA program is led by the NIH's National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS)
 - **University of Pittsburgh Physicians Foundation Award**
- Foundation grants
 - **VascularCures (Wylie Award – 50K/year for three years!!!)**
 - **SVS Foundation** (in collaboration with the ACS will supplement a K award!!!)
 - **Jobst Foundation**
 - **SUS Junior Faculty Research Award**

Bigger Awards for Junior Faculty

- **NIH K series**
 - Mentored grant (need one-two mentors and an advisor group)
 - Mostly salary support with little for the project
 - 75% protected time for research (some leniency in the later years)
 - **MUST PUBLISH DURING THIS TIME!!!**
- **VA Career Development Award**
 - Requires s
- **American Heart Association Career Development Award**

K to R Transition

Become an Early Career Reviewer

- Can be a temporary member of a study section
- Learn the process and what reviewers want

Make sure your profile is current on era commons

- ESI status is CRITICAL
- Early stage investigator will have a higher payline in some institutes (as much as 10 points)
- Time off for family leave can be deducted from your total time as an ESI

Speak to program officers on the phone!

- Email first with a nice introduction
- Send a specific aims page
- They want to help you

GO TO THE MEETINGS OFFERED BY NIH!

- K to R meeting (for K08 and K23)
- Networking
- Meet program officers

Establish independence

- Transition from first to senior author
- Move your lab
- Identify a “new” research question
- Meet new collaborators

Thank you!!



Sachdevu2@upmc.edu

(917)-609-0639