

#IAmABiologist

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What does your day-to-day look like as a neuroscience postdoc?

I usually have morning meetings at 9.30 and start my behavioural experiments at 11. I'm interested in spatial memory, so I study how mice explore their environment based on spatial cues. I'd say I spend 20% of my time on data analysis, 60% in the lab, 20% in meetings or seminars.

What is your current topic of research?

I'm interested in studying different genetic mouse models that represent human conditions. In Alzheimer's, amyloid beta peptide and the tau protein characterise the condition. I'm looking at how the presence of such proteins in the brain and more specifically in the hippocampus influences spatial navigation.

From the biological sciences, why did you choose to study neuroscience?

During my undergraduate and PhD days in Athens, I had opportunities to be exposed to many disciplines such as Immunology, Cancer, Proteomics. Collaboration in the institute was highly encouraged. I was fascinated with neuroimmunology, and I wanted to understand why neurons start to die when for example microglia, the brain's innate immune cells, go awry.

What are your career aspirations given your expertise and background?

I am currently a senior postdoc in John O'Keefe's lab - ultimately, I want to lead a team. Be it in academia or industry, I know I love designing experiments - sometimes more so than running them. I have lots of experience in setting up *in vivo* experiments and hope to contribute my expertise in the future answering important scientific questions. So I see myself running a small team in 5 years' time.

Could you give us a brief picture of your career trajectory thus far?

I grew up in Cyprus and took courses in Maths, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology in high school. I then studied Biology at the University of Athens in Greece. Excited about the technology of transgenics, I continued with a PhD in neurodegeneration. I then moved to the UK and have been in the O'Keefe Lab at SWC for 6 years.



What advice do you have for students who want to become biologists?

Expose your knowledge to many subjects and don't narrow down your choices too early. I come from a small island in the Mediterranean. Don't let anyone tell you you can't make it because of your skin colour, gender, or any other reason. Don't be afraid to talk to scientists! Be open to challenges. Know that science can be made up of 80% failed experiments and it's not always a "eureka" moment.