

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS FOR THE BRIGHTEST AND BEST

A conversation with **NICK BRANDON**, Chief Scientist, Neuroscience, IMED at AstraZeneca



The AstraZeneca IMED Biotech unit is recruiting its largest single postdoc intake ever. The Anglo-Swedish pharmaceutical company is calling for new postdoc fellows to fill roles at its sites in the US, UK, and Sweden. The company's postdoc programme was launched in 2011, and the newest recruits will boost the postdoc ranks to about 130 scientists. The company strives for an ideal industrial postdoctoral environment, melding industrial resources and expertise with strong academic ties.

Why is the postdoc programme so important to AstraZeneca now?

It's an amazing time to be in the life sciences and drug discovery. The current pace of scientific discovery globally, coupled with the advances we have made within AstraZeneca around our science, has created many opportunities in the AstraZeneca science ecosystem for postdocs to thrive. We rely on our postdocs for that next wave of innovation which might be in areas such as gene editing, drug delivery, novel compound synthesis or regenerative biology. Our programme was started back in 2011 to help raise the energy in our labs, but it has grown into something more and is now a cornerstone of our scientific strategy.

In what areas are you recruiting?

We are recruiting across all of our units within the IMED Biotech unit of AstraZeneca. This includes our core therapy areas (Oncology, Respiratory/Inflammation/Autoimmunity, Cardiovascular and Metabolic Disorders) and functional units (Personal Healthcare and Biomarkers, Early Clinical Development, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Drug Safety and Metabolism and Discovery Sciences). Whatever the area, we are looking for the best in early-career scientists to join us as postdoc fellows to further

their careers and our science.

How does your programme differ from some other industrial postdocs?

We provide a unique environment where we look to maximize the postdocs opportunities to deliver great science. So this means working with their AZ mentor and the many talented colleagues within AZ but also linking up with an academic mentor from day 1. When you hit a brick wall, having someone to call on who has been a leader in your area can be really helpful. They can serve as simply a sounding board, but also as a hands-on scientific collaborator. I think this set-up plus the consistent support we provide from the postdoc committee and other senior leaders in the IMED to focus on ground-breaking science sets us apart from our competitors.

What is the scientific role of the academic advisor?

We expect our academic advisors to support the incoming postdoc with ideas around experiments and maybe sharing of reagents and data to get the work off to a great start. Over the course of the postdoc tenure we hope they will provide great mentorship alongside that received from within AstraZeneca, to guide the postdoc through the many up and downs you always face in a project.

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What are your goals for postdocs?

They are quite simple. I want the postdoc to have a really good experience while at AstraZeneca, tackling challenging scientific hypotheses, generating great data for great papers, all within a supportive environment. If this happens they will have contributed to the scientific goals of AstraZeneca and critically position themselves for the next step in their career. We want our postdocs to use this experience as a launching pad for wherever they go next, whether that is to remain in pharma/biotech or return to academia.

What sort of mentoring environment have you created?

Once the postdocs are here, they will find a very supportive mentoring process. Every postdoc has a committee made up of internal scientists and their academic advisor who they will meet regularly and who will provide a consistent source of feedback and direction over the period they are at AstraZeneca.

What are some advantages of doing an industrial postdoc?

There are a lot of advantages to working in a large company like AstraZeneca. We have a lot of different resources both technical and intellectual. We are also very collaborative. Together this provides an environment for great achievement. In addition our postdocs get great exposure to the cut and thrust of drug discovery from early discovery through clinical trials. The culture at AstraZeneca created over the last several years, which is steeped in science, makes this an exciting place to be.

How does AstraZeneca benefit from this postdoc programme?

For AstraZeneca the programme has infused our laboratories with fresh ideas and driven the science which we believe will create the drug discovery projects and technology platforms of tomorrow. I still think there is a lot more to come from the programme and that starts with the hiring of the new postdoc fellows.



Discover how far you can take your science

Science inspires us at AstraZeneca. Patient needs drive us. So we're always ready to take research into uncharted territories. To pursue discovery beyond imagination. To turn pioneering ideas into life-changing medicines. It's what we do and love. And on our Post Doc programme, you'll find this passion is compelling.

Based at one of our sites in the US, UK or Sweden, you'll take on innovative, even ground-breaking scientific projects, supported by a world-leading pharmaceutical company. You'll be challenging existing thinking and implementing your novel ideas. Sharing experiences with your peers and presenting your findings to esteemed audiences. Backed by true experts in their fields.

Di is a Post Doc Scientist in Nano Engineering: "The Post Doc programme combines industry and academic research. For the first time, we demonstrated an atomic scale surface modification of pharmaceutical particles that have the potential for advanced drug delivery applications."

If you have a science-based PhD and/or MD, plus a strong record in a relevant scientific field, your time with us could be equally meaningful. Find out more at <https://careers.astrazeneca.com/campaigns/post-doctorate>

