

Insight Into Editor

**Insight Into the Editor: Nigel Mackman, PhD,
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill**



Why did you choose the profession of scientific investigation?

Ever since I was a kid, I was fascinated in how things worked. I loved being outdoors interacting with nature. Biology was my best subject at school, and I found it really easy compared with other subjects—it all made sense. When I was 12, I decided I would get a PhD and become a scientist. For some reason my school advisor tried to discourage me. My parents (both nonscientists) simply asked if I could make a living being a scientist. I told them I didn't know. I would have liked to be an ecologist but felt that the job opportunities were limited, so I studied molecular biology instead. None of my 3 children wanted to be scientists, but my nephew is studying environmental science at the University of Birmingham, UK.

Who have been your role model(s) in your scientific and professional life?

I joined the coagulation field in 1987. My first role model was Dr Earl Davie because he was an advisor on our Program Project Grant. He had cloned nearly every gene on the clotting cascade (except tissue factor). Other senior people in the field that have been a big influence in my career were Dr Bob Rosenberg, Dr Chuck Esmon, Dr David Ginsburg, and Dr Shaun Coughlin.

What have been important influences on your professional life?

The American Heart Association has been the most important influence on my scientific career. I have received a Postdoc fellowship, an Established Investigator Award, and several other grants that have supported my research. The *Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis, and Vascular Biology* council of the American Heart Association has been my home for 30 years. I have many friends and colleagues in the council.

What are your scientific inspirations?

Scientific inspiration for my work comes from listening to scientific presentations and reading papers. For instance, this Spring I attended a Keystone Meeting on Hemorrhagic Fever viruses. Dr John Connor presented a talk on the detection of virus particles using single-particle interferometric imaging sensing. This technique uses antibody capture of viral particles in blood and can detect as little as 100 plaque forming units/mL in 30 minutes. We are working with Dr Connor to see if this technology can be applied to quantitate the number of tissue factor-positive microvesicles in human plasma.

How have mentors contributed to your professional development?

My PhD supervisor, Dr Barry Holland, started my career at the University of Leicester, UK. For my second postdoc, I moved to The Scripps Research Institute to work with Dr Tom Edgington. He gave me the resources to clone the human tissue factor gene and the freedom to pursue other interesting projects. During my 20 years at The Scripps Research Institute, Dr Linda Curtiss was an important mentor.

If you knew then what you know now, would you do anything different?

I would not change anything. I have been successful in 2 different countries in 3 different scientific environments (University of Leicester, The Scripps Research Institute, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). I moved to each place at the right time in my career.

What wisdom do you impart on new investigators?

Work on important questions even if the project is challenging. Find a good mentor. The *ATVB* council has a great mentoring program, if there is nobody in your institution. Find collaborators that complement your expertise so that the collaboration is synergistic. Go to conferences to meet the leaders in the field. Take time to carefully select postdocs, graduate students, and technicians.

If you were not a scientist, which profession would you pick?

I would be a painter or a photographer. I really enjoy taking pictures of histological sections and creating diagrams for reviews and presentations.

Which direction do you envisage your science taking?

I have tried part-time administration and realized that this took me away from the lab. I have now returned to the lab full time and am having fun again solving scientific problems. I really like passing on my knowledge of how to do good science. My lab currently has 2 postdoctoral fellows and 4 undergraduate students.

What are your nonscientific activities?

My wife and I have a large garden and I really enjoy gardening. I also play golf regularly—it is one of the few activities where my scientific brain turns off.

What sports do you follow?

I follow the PGA (golf) and the Premier League (English football).

What is your favorite music?

I love listening to all kinds of music from country to rock.

What are your favorite foods and are they heart healthy?

My family and I like eating curries, which contain heart-healthy ingredients, such as turmeric, garlic, and ginger.

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