Developing your research career in ageing, focussing on scientific excellence and knowledge translation

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Experience with Early Career Fellowships

- Member, NHMRC Training Awards Panel for PhD scholarships, 2002
- Member, NHMRC Training Awards Panel for Training Fellowships in Public Health, 2003
- Chair, NHMRC Panel for Clinical, Professional and General Practice Postdoctoral Training Fellowships, 2004-2005
- Member, NHMRC Early Career Award Panel, 2011
- Alzheimer's Australia Dementia Research Foundation panel member 2005-2013 included postdocs 2007+

Major Research Questions

1. What do people age so differently, and how can we measure 'ageing' or 'age'?

2. What causes normal cognitive ageing?

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3.   Impact of our ageing population on our cognitive capital

4. Can we prevent or delay dementia?

5. How can we identify unsafe older drivers and what can we do to improve driving skill?

6. How can we optimise cognitive ageing through interventions?

Thinking about you!

- What is a successful career to you?
  - Identify your values
  - Identify your constraints
  - Identify your opportunities
- Planning your career
- Components of track record
- Skills
- Examples of careers
- Combining career and family
- Progressing to mid-career

Values

- Scientific discovery
- Helping others
- Autonomy
- Working in a team
- Family comes first
- Opportunities for travel
- Leadership
- Creativity

- Challenge
- Influence
- Work-life balance
- Making a lot of money
- Not working weekends
- Equality of opportunity
- Social justice

Identify your constraints

- Young children, ageing parents
- Partner's job and needs
- Capacity for travel
- Do not want to work long hours
- Do not want to move location
- Scope of your skill base and discipline area
- Equipment you need for your work
- Clinical samples, rare disease
- Personality (introvert, extrovert, anxious)
- Availability of datasets

Identify your opportunities

- Personal strengths – methodological skills, interpersonal skills, professional skills, clinical experience
- Professional networks
- Institutional strengths in relevant ageing research areas
- Flavour of the month topics
- Funding schemes for which you are eligible, including schemes for special groups
- Personal timing in relation to fellowships and vacancies

Planning your career

- Know your passion!
- Identify your overall goal and direction
- Identify the skills and achievements you need to get there
- Allow sufficient time to get there, take detours if necessary
  - Academia
  - Clinical practice
  - NGO
  - Government

Components of track record

- Clock starts on award of PhD
- Teaching – lecturing, tutoring, labs, convening, student appraisals and peer reviews
- Research – publications, grants, conference papers, invited talks, government reports
- Research impact – media, application of your findings in policy or practice
- Administration and professional involvement – committees, professional organisations
- Awards and prizes
- Research environment – institution, group, supervisor

Examples of careers

- Dr Lee-Fay Low – Assoc Prof University of Sydney Faculty of Health Sciences
- Dr Chris Hatherly – National Research Manager Alz Aust
- Dr Lesley Ross – Tenure Track USA
- Dr Allison Bielak – Tenure Track USA
- Dr Nicolas Cherbuin – ARC Future Fellow
- Dr Kerry Sargent-Cox – Senior Lecturer ANU Med School
- Dr Tim Windsor – Future Fellow, Psychology Academic
- Dr Natalie Chan – Clinical Psychologist in private practice

Combining Work and Family

- Main reason for gender differences in career progression
- Consideration of family carer leave differs among career paths due to structural factors eg. continuing appointments have greater entitlements
- Difficulty with conference travel, meeting attendance, committee membership etc.
- Men and women have family responsibilities
- Identify schemes to fund additional support or re-entry
- Time management, prioritisation, key factors

Mentoree – Mentoring (Meyers & Begg, 2012, Clin Transl. Med)

- Formal support mechanisms for research mentors that takes into account the economic, personal and time costs of mentoring

- Training programs to improve the quality of mentoring which includes both mentee and mentor seminars

- Ongoing assessment of the alignment of mentee and mentor expectations to foster successful mentoring

- Formative feedback mechanisms to assist research mentors and program leaders

Schollen et al. 2014 Academic Medicine

- Both formal and informal mentoring important.

Progressing to Mid-Career

- Trajectory and job design differs according to career path

- 5 to 10 years postdoc – you will transition to 'mid' career

- Assume responsibility for own career networking and development

- Provide mentoring for early career researchers

- Chair PhD panels

- Lead competitive grants and programs

- Convene courses and take on administrative roles
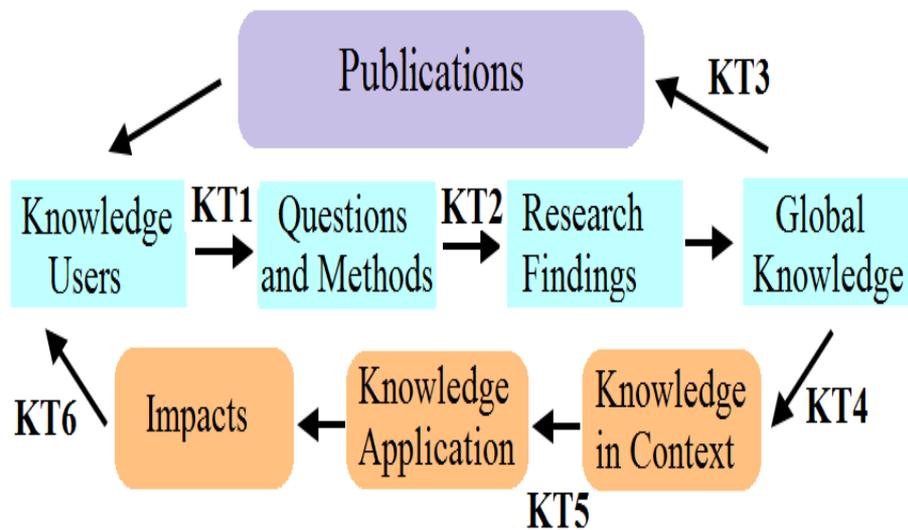
Knowledge Translation

Conclusion

- Ageing is a growth industry, many opportunities
- Spend time career planning and knowing your strengths, weaknesses, values, skills and goals
- Work to develop track record – during PhD onwards
- Respond to current opportunities, policy priorities and stay update with skills
- Strive for excellence in all areas of professional practice

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