

## **Your Next Job: Should it be in Academic Medicine or Pharmaceuticals/Biotechnology?**

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**Take home message:** Either of these environments can be good places to do research and develop your career. At the two ends of the recruitment spectrum in industry, you would be to be recruited as an acknowledged expert in a particular field, or recruited as a junior bench scientist to work on the company's project.

At the current time, scientists can move from academia to biotech or pharm and vice versa with relative ease. However in order to be able to move to a job in academia from industry, you must keep up a steady publication record in the field, network with colleagues at meetings, and maintain your passion for science.

### **Pharmaceutical Industry/Biotech:**

Work organization: Research is for the most part very goal or product oriented. The goals are most frequently not determined by the bench scientist but by managers further up in the company. However, particularly in discovery units, goals may be determined by the scientists.

For efficiency – teamwork (typically interdisciplinary) is necessary. In general you may only work on a limited part of a project so that it progresses most efficiently using people's different expertises. After getting an exciting result your project may be passed on to another scientist for the most effective follow-through.

Working conditions: Laboratory equipment in industry is usually excellent and there are many resources and support people. Many women find that industry is more of a meritocracy than academia. This relatively more egalitarian structure often means higher pay and faster promotion.

A hot area currently is chemistry with structural biology component.

What you don't get: No long-term commitment: if your project ends you are either switched to another project or your job ends.

### **Academia:**

Work organization: In academia you have more freedom to follow an idea and research project – as long as you are successful getting funding for the research. If your job is primarily research you will be expected to apply for funding to support the research as well as much of your salary.

Working conditions: You can outfit a research lab very well with funds from a start-up package and grants. Your job can have multiple components: science can be one part and teaching and administration (and clinical work if you are an MD) can be other parts. There are often multiple parallel tracks that allow alternative emphasis (see <http://www.mssm.edu/forfaculty/development/>).

What you do get: Longer term job commitment. You have multi-year contracts and can get tenure and therefore significant security. However even with tenure, which secures your job, you must be successful in competitive funding to continue your research.

A more stable environment in academia also means less fluidity because you become part of a more traditional power structure.