



# Promoting and Assessing the Sallie Rosen Kaplan Fellowship Program



Erika Ginsburg, Angela Jones, and Jonathan S. Wiest

Center for Cancer Training, National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD 20892

## Abstract

How can we facilitate retention and advancement of women in biomedical research, promote positive mentoring relationships, and track their outcomes? These are questions we ask about the Sallie Rosen Kaplan fellowship (SRK) program, managed by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) Center for Cancer Training (CCT), as we meet our mission of catalyzing development and advancement of a 21<sup>st</sup> century cancer research workforce. With a commitment to education and opportunities for women, Kaplan's estate established a fellowship to recruit postdoctoral women to NCI. Since its inception in 2000, all awardees have gone on to successful scientific careers. However, recent studies show women in science are significantly more likely to leave research careers earlier than men, specifically at the transition from mentored to independent investigator. Therefore, the SRK fellowship changed in 2013 to address a specific issue - how to retain women in the scientific pipeline.

What happens during the transition from trainee to independence? According to reports, one contributing factor is self-confidence. The SRK fellowship embraced the challenge-how do we better retain and advance the careers of women in science? By choosing role models and mentors, designing classes and workshops to strengthen leadership skills, these women are better equipped to face the competitive nature of the job market and to remain in a research career as independent investigators. Even though the revised program is new, fellows already report improved confidence and a stronger sense of what they want. Outcomes from previous participants and lessons learned from the SRK program demonstrating CCT's commitment to workforce development and mentoring will be described.



**Cohort 1**  
Front row: Catherine Volle, Joy Gary, Monica Markovski.  
Back row: Rena Jones, Anna Coghill, Ashley Felix, Kristin Guertin, Kristin Litzelman, Carrie House, Fatima Ali-Rahmani



**Cohort 2**  
From left to right: Elizabeth Spehalski, Rachel Van Duyne, Leah Randles, Mariia Novikova, Clara Bodelon, Khadijah Mitchell, Tiffany Lyle, Elizabeth Yanik, Pamela Gallagher, Maeve Mullooly

## Workforce Development

### NCI's Sally Rosen Kaplan Fellowship Program: A Program to Retain and Advance the Careers of Women in Science

- To support women in biomedical research at the NCI
- To provide the best and brightest women to the NCI postdoctoral community
- To change focus of the award from recruitment to retention since women historically leave academic science at the transition from a mentored to an independent stage of their careers



### Nomination Process and Purpose

- Self-nominated, competitive program for female postdoctoral fellows within the NCI's intramural research settings
- To provide additional mentoring opportunities, workshops, and seminars designed to strengthen leadership skills over a one-year period.

### Applicant Criteria

- Personal Statement/Essay
- Professional History and Resume
- Reference Letters
- Work Environment

## Program Elements

- 30-week professional coaching with customized program
- Monthly meeting with second mentor selected from senior women in government, academia, or industry
- Additional workshops offered by NCI Office of Workforce and Professional Development
- Additional coaching on Presentation/Communication skills
- Career development panel discussion
- Grantsmanship seminar

## Effectiveness and Data Tracking

### Previous SRK fellows, 2000-2012

- 4 in science administration, 3 in industry, 2 in health care, 9 performing research, 3 in academia, 1 NCI postdoc

### Cohort 1, 2013-2014

- 10 fellows graduated September 2014
- 5 transitioned to independent research careers
- 5 remaining as NCI postdocs

### Cohort 2, 2014-2015

- 10 fellows will graduate September 2015
- 1 received offer at university

## Conclusions

- Improved confidence and stronger sense of self
- Second mentors provide advice, expertise, and role models
- Cohesive and interactive cohorts lead to increased networking opportunities
- Peer-to-peer mentoring

## Future Directions

- Increase interactions between cohorts
- Continue to track outcomes

## References

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