

FELLOWSHIPS

What are they?

Do I want to?

*How to get one**

*How to make the most of it***

Ellen Flint

MRC Strategic Skills Fellow in Population Health

Lecturer at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

**Using a case study of me, n=1...*

***Or “Ellen’s regrets from year 1”*

WHAT IS A FELLOWSHIP?

- A 3 or 4 year program of research, training and development.
- Different schemes for different subject areas and career stages
- Capacity building: honing your skills and/or gaining new ones
- Independent and self-directed, yet collaborative. Not an 'apprenticeship', but not a solo effort.
- Time and space to focus on a topic which really interests you and gain valuable skills.
- Mentorship outside of your institution/discipline

wellcometrust



MARIE CURIE ACTIONS



DO I WANT A FELLOWSHIP?

YEAH!

- Time and space to focus on a real interest.
- Opportunity for training and mentoring: hard to get on someone else's project.
- Managing your own budget and time: being your own boss.
- Freedom to collaborate widely
- Emancipation from things you may not wish to do (e.g. teaching)
- Prestige and CV glitter, and your university might promote you.
- A 3 or 4 year contract is nicer than a 1 year contract. Relative job security...!

NAH.

- Narrow focus... some people prefer a more diverse research portfolio
- Independence = loneliness?
- Autonomy = chronic procrastination?
- Self-direction = disorientation?
- Sometimes need to speak loudly to be heard by busy senior academics
"She's not on my project/not *my* postdoc therefore I don't *need* to help her".
- Feeling prevented from doing things you may love (e.g. teaching).

REFLECTIONS ON MY EXPERIENCE

- MRC Strategic Skills Postdoctoral Fellowship in Population Health Science (2014-2017)
 - Training
 - Development
 - Project
 - Person
 - Place

Disclaimer: It's all different now, they changed the schemes this year.



- Writing your proposal and 'The Form'
- Getting it submitted
- Peer review stage and shortlisting
- Interview preparation: how your institution can and should help you
- The Interview

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF A FELLOWSHIP IF YOU GET ONE

- Know yourself. If you're the sort of person who can't watch an episode of Bake Off without WhatsApping your Mum every 3 seconds, don't expect yourself to work solo for 3 years.
- Don't suffer in silence. If in doubt, reach out. Fellowship applications require you to sign up an army of 'mentors', 'sponsors', 'collaborators'... Use them!
- Set small, bitesize goals. It's impossible to time-manage over the course of 1 year, let alone 3.
- Allow yourself time to build the holistic, academic career we all really want. Teach, make yourself part of the life of your department, sit on committees, volunteer to give talks. Don't squirrel away. Even if your Fellowship T&Cs technically forbid you from spending more than 6 hours per week on "non-fellowship activities": they're there to protect your research time if you need it. Opt out if you wish!
- Don't feel completely wedded to carrying out the research you said you would do in your protocol, to the letter. The field changes and things move on. If you come across something more exciting, do that instead. It's what they would want.