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# Sophia BELKHELFA, Ph.D

Patent engineer

Interviewed by Laura MATABISHI-BIBI

Sophia BELKHELFA is a patent engineer for an intellectual property firm dedicated to the Health sector.



Her work is focused on helping clients to protect their intellectual property by securing patents for their inventions.

#### Q: Could you give us a brief description of your background?

**Sophia:** I obtained my Master's degree in Biotechnology, specialized in Systems and Synthetic Biology at the University of Evry. Subsequently, I completed my doctoral studies at the University Paris Saclay, where I conducted research on the genetic adaptation of microorganisms for industrial production of chemical compounds within CEA. Finally, I conducted a post-doctoral fellowship at INRAE, where I continued to work on the same topic.

## Q: How did you make your transition from your Ph.D. to your current position?

**Sophia:** After completing my post-doctoral fellowship, I came to the realization that although I was still passionate about science, I no longer wanted to pursue laboratory-based work. In search of a career that could merge my scientific expertise with my interests, I explored various possibilities. During my time at CEA, I was introduced to the world of patents. This sparked my interest and led me to apply for a position as a patent examiner at the National Industrial Property Institute (INPI) where I spent over two years in the medical devices and biotechnologies division, where I honed my skills in patent law.

With the knowledge and experience gained from my time at INPI, I then transitioned to a role as a patent engineer in an intellectual property firm. This career change has allowed me to leverage my scientific expertise while still being able to contribute to the advancement of science in a different way.



# Sophia BELKHELFA, Ph.D

Patent engineer

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### Q: Can you give a brief description of your daily tasks?

**Sophia:** As a patent engineer, my job is both dynamic and

intellectually stimulating. Each day presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities to learn. One of the primary aspects of my role is to guide companies through the patent process, from drafting and filing to navigating the complexities of different patent offices around the world. In addition, I also provide strategic guidance to companies on their competitive landscape, advising on freedom to operate issues and R&D development strategies.

## Q: What did you need more in your profile to be recruited as a patent engineer?

**Sophia:** Undoubtedly, my PhD has been a valuable asset in my career but equally important is my passion for continued learning and self-development. In the field of intellectual property, it is essential to stay up-to-date with the latest trends and legal requirements, which often involves undergoing various training programs to improve one's skills (e.g., CEIPI, Pre-EQE, EQE, and EQF).

## Q: What transferable skills are you still applying on your career today?

**Sophia:** Maintaining a high level of rigor is crucial, particularly when it comes to organization. The job often involves managing precise and constant deadlines. Another vital skill is the ability to search for relevant informations, particularly when working in a scientific field. This involves being able to sift through and understand large quantities of data and to use critical thinking to analyze scientific articles and patents. Of course, technical expertise is also essential. Having a deep understanding of the most innovative inventions and the ability to apply the technical knowledge acquired during your research is key to success in the field.



# **HOW TO PURSUE A CAREER IN R&D?**

Summary of February's webinar by Hadjer OULDALI

Last month was held the second webinar of Réseau Biotechno on « How to pursue a career in R&D ? ». We were pleased to welcome Laurence Goffin (Cluster Head, Lundbeck), François Aubert (R&D Project Manager, Cousin Surgery), Virginia Sanchez-Quiles (Principal Scientist, Mnemo Therapeutics), and Fabien Delahaye (Head of Single Cell Genomics, Sanofi) to answer this question.

If you haven't had a chance to attend, here are some key takeaways from this webinar:

# PhD is definitely bringing an added value to get hired into a private company, and even after several years of post-doc

The speakers all agreed to say that having a PhD could make a big difference to enter the industry. Recruiters are increasingly looking for highly motivated profiles with a strong scientific background.

Although doing a post-doc is not required to move into industry, post-doc experiences allow to develop new skills, and to acquire international experience and a greater degree of autonomy. Indeed, the post doc is an experience when you are in a more leading position in comparison to the PhD, which is highly appreciated by private companies in the perspective of hiring you as a project manager.

Moreover, many companies are developing collaborations with academic groups, and need such profiles that are able to fill the gap between industry and academia.







# **HOW TO PURSUE A CAREER IN R&D?**

Summary of February's webinar by Hadjer OULDALI

 Understanding companies working goals methods is key to be successful in moving from academia to private sector.

In private companies, there are aspects of the work that are not expected when coming from academia. You will be working with different business units, and on various projects with the goal to bring new products/technologies in the market and not necessarily to publish articles.

The transition can be also eased through courses and certification.

Companies are aware that you will need time to understand properly their functionment and to be productive.

Moving to private and big companies can bring you a lot

Private companies will make you work in a team work way, and will bring you the financial support to help you developing your research.

The speakers all agreed that moving to big companies allow them to develop science in a stable environment in comparison to non-permanent contract proposed in the academic sector.

Take time to know what you want to do and how to sell yourself

Keep in mind to think about and to choose a job that you like and that matters to you, beyond the stability of what private companies could bring. This is crucial to increase your skills and to face changement during your career.







# **HOW TO PURSUE A CAREER IN R&D?**

Summary of February's webinar by Hadjer OULDALI

#### Reach out to people will help you to get hired

One of the efficient ways to get hired is by using your network to land an interview. In your network, many people have the potential to help you find a job. Do not be shy to contact them. It is important to be mindful of how you reach out to each person to get a response.

## Motivation and flexibility are key

As a candidate, you need to show your motivation and determination for the job to get hired. The advices of the speakers is not to be afraid and to be prepared to take the opportunity to have a career path that is as various as possible.

The webinar replay is available <a href="here">here</a>!





#### Meet our WEBINAR Team!



#### **Nassim Salem**

Hi! I'm Nassim, PharmD from Grenoble University and currently PhD Student in 3rd year. I'm working in Immuno-Oncology, developing new approaches in cell therapy. Last year I created the BiotechnoSUD forum with the whole Bio'M team and we aim to reproduce this great experience together with this ambitious national webinar program!



#### **Hadjer Ouldali**

I am Hadjer, I got my PhD in Life and Health Sciences in 2021. I focused on developing a new approach of protein sequencing using nanopore based single-molecule sensing. I am very happy to have joined Réseau Biotechno and to be part of the webinar team in the aim to help other PhD students and young researchers to know more about career opportunities where they can reach their full professional potential.



#### **Hélène Batina**

Adishatz! I am Hélène, a microbial molecular biology engineer, the oldest member of the Marseille team! I graduated with a master's degree in fungal biotechnology and I want to promote the engineers' profiles that come from master's degrees. I joined the BioM association and more particularly the organization of monthly webinars after attending the first forum in Marseille.



#### **Chloé Bouarab**

Hi there! I'm a neuroscientist. After a postdoc in the US, I decided to come back to France and I'm now working at the Pasteur Institute in Paris. My projects focus on neuropsychiatric diseases and the mechanisms behind them. At Réseau BIOTechno, I'm part of the national webinar team and I'm involved in the program of the Paris forum. It can be hard to know what options are available after a master/PhD, we are here to help!



#### **Anne Cromer**

With 20 years of experience in translational research and clinical biomarker programs in public and private sectors. I'm happy to support young scientists career development and to boost their engagement in the health innovation ecosystem. Within Reseau Biotechno, I develop the program for AuRA events (Forum, Webinars, Newsletters) to foster multidisciplinary connexions between young scientists from academia and industry actors.



#### **Eka Putra Gusti Ngurah Putu**

Hello! My full name is rather long, but I go by Raheka. I am currently a 2nd-year Ph.D. Student in chemistry at Institut Curie and Paris Saclay University. In my Ph.D. project, I aim to develop a novel chemical tool to study DNA damage in cancer. At Reseau Biotechno, I am part of the newsletter and webinar team. As part of Reseau Biotechno, I could build up my network in France and gain collaborative working experience with different personnel from different disciplines and countries.



The REAL section (for Read – Analyze – Listen) highlights our recommendations of the month.



## What you can READ this month?

Les Oubliés de la Science by Camille Van Belle

What if History of Science is not what it seems like? Thanks to this comic, discover people who were "forgotten" in Science. Meet 48 women and men who made very important discoveries but who were ousted because of their personalities, or mainly because of racism and sexism.



# What you can ANALYZE this month?

Is a PhD worth it now in 2023? [the data] by Andy & Dr Andrew Stapleton

Deciding to pursue a PhD is a decision not to be taken lightly. Whether or not it is worth it for you depends on a number of circumstances such as your career goals, financial stability, stage in life, support networks, interest in the subject, ability to self-motivate and so much more.



## What you can LISTEN this month?

<u>Recherche et vous 1st episode about AI for research, art and</u>
 <u>company creation</u> by Dr Perrine Burdeyron

Discover how Jeanne Le Peillet managed to combine art and science through the company she created during her PhD : Beink.





Mar-Jun

1st-30th

Registration opens for the contest "Prix National Jeunes chercheurs" Promega - by PROMEGA Registration until June 30th

Where? Online

The "Prix National Jeunes Chercheurs" awarded by Promega rewards the best articles and scientific communications presenting applications or methodologies using Promega's technology.

Click <a href="https://example.com/here">here</a> for for more information.



April 6<sup>th</sup>

PhD Meetings Job fair 6 avril - by PhD Talent Thursday 6th, 09:00 am to 6:00 pm

Where? Online

Are you looking for a job? On April 6th, the PhD Meeting - Job Fair is the place to be! Take part in the online thematic event organized on the PhDTalent platform. Click <a href="https://example.com/here">here</a> for more information.



April

13<sup>rd</sup>

Webinar "Changement climatique et action en entreprise"

Where? Online

Learn how to help the planet within your company with Alumni for the Planet, a collective of French higher education alumni who want to act against climate change. This webinar is co-organized with Audencia business school alumni.

Click <u>here</u> for more information.



April 17<sup>th</sup> **Registration opens for Pint of science France -** by Pint of Science

Monday 17th

Where? Online

Pint of Science is a worldwide science festival which brings researchers to your local pub/cafe/space to share their scientific discoveries with you. The tickets and programme will be released 17 April.

Click here for more information!







April

19<sup>th</sup>

**Transitioning to industry: how, where and when Wednesday, 19**<sup>th</sup> **April - from 8 pm**Where ? Online

Looking to move to industry? Searching for a job? Don't know where and how to start? This event is where you need to be! Click <a href="here">here</a> to register.

BIDMC Postdoc Association

April

26<sup>th</sup>

**Réseau Biotechno's #4 Webinar Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup> April - from 6:30 pm**Where ? Online

Come and meet the 4 speakers and ask your questions about the clinical research sector!



April 30<sup>th</sup>

**Nikon Small World competition 2023** - by Nikon Call for entries, submission deadline April 30th Where? Online

Anyone with an interest in microscopy who is not an employee of Nikon or competing manufacturers may submit their best light microscopy image!

Click <a href="https://example.com/here-formation">here-formation</a>.



May 3<sup>rd</sup>

Les P'tits Déj de l'ICI – by the Institute for Cancer and Immunology

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> – from 9:00 to 11:30 am The address is to confirm.

The topic will be about "Business intelligence" with Gnosis, Aix-Marseille School of Management and Innate Pharma.

Email <u>ici-contact@univ-amu.fr</u> to have more information and to register.





# We are recruiting!

You are welcome to join the Réseau Biotechno's Newsletter team. Don't hesitate to contact us at <a href="mailto:newsletter@reseau-biotechno.com">newsletter@reseau-biotechno.com</a>