

Case Study: Alumni

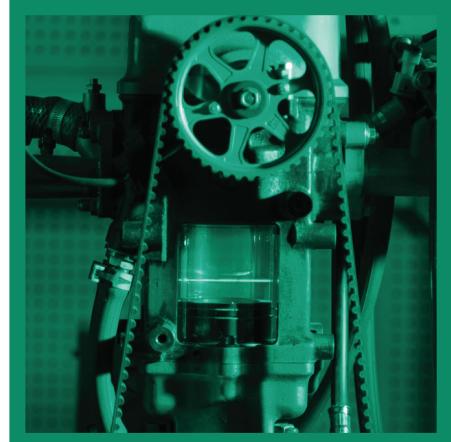
Daren, Physics (BSc) and Theoretical Physics (PhD)

Graduation Year: 1989

Job Title: Head - Biopharm Clinical Pharmacology Modelling

Employer: GlaxoSmithKline (GSK)

Department: Clinical Pharmacology Modelling & Simulation



What does your job involve?

I head a group in Clinical Pharmacology Modelling and Simulation, charged with understanding how monoclonal antibodies and other therapeutic proteins can be developed into medicines for patients. There really are no 'typical days'. I could be involved in anything from looking at the latest preclinical screening data for a promising new candidate, to simulating a clinical trial design for late phase. I might conduct Due Diligence on an external company asset or meet the FDA to discuss proposed development plans. At the personal level, I manage a group and oversee their development as they grow into more senior roles.

Do you use skills that you obtained during your Imperial course?

Common skills are a thirst for knowledge coupled with good scientific judgement. An ability to analyse data and deduce consequences for development is a given. Other interpersonal and influencing skills often come into play. More recently, I have become a Project Leader and now carry full accountability for the development of a monoclonal antibody that's in the clinic.

“I was pretty heavily involved in extracurricular activities. I was involved with the Royal College of Science Motor Club, made a parachute jump and flew a glider.”

- Daren

Can you name three things you like about your job?

Three things I enjoy about my job include:

1. The science
2. The accountability
3. Seeing others develop under my guidance

Is there anything you are less keen on?

1. The meetings (necessary evil that need careful planning)
2. Email overload
3. My commute



Did you choose your course with this particular occupation in mind?

I never had an occupation in mind (which is just as well considering where I ended up), but I originally went to Imperial to study Chemistry, I discovered that the areas I was most interested in were really Physics, so at the end of the first year I transferred to Physics and started again. I spent three very pleasurable years studying and particularly enjoyed the more mathematical aspects. At the end of my third year I was offered a place to study a PhD in Theoretical Physics, and stayed on for a further three years. An SERC Postdoctoral Fellowship at Sussex followed, accompanied by a harder career choice: continue in Physics or try something else. By this time I had developed an interest in Biology and applied for a Wellcome Trust Training Fellowship at Oxford University. Five years working for ex-Imperial College Professor Roy Anderson (whatever happened to him?) on Epidemiology of antibiotic resistance and hospital infections really sparked my interests further. At the start of the New Millennium I joined Glaxo Wellcome to take my quantitative modelling skills into the Pharma arena. Eight years later I'm still here. I now run a group that use modelling in Clinical Pharmacology to help develop Monoclonal Antibodies.

What skills did you develop within your degree that you find useful in your present role?

The skills I use most from my time at Imperial are maths (obviously), but more importantly, scientific judgement gained from the research process itself. That's a core skill and really can't be overlooked in any scientific training.

Were you involved in any extracurricular activities?

I was pretty heavily involved in extracurricular activities. I was involved with the Royal College of Science Motor Club, made a parachute jump and flew a glider. In my second year I was RCS Academic Affairs Officer and went on an exchange to the University of Delaware to build parapsychology experiments! In my third year I rowed (lightweight) and ran the Astronomical Society. As a post-graduate I was treasurer of Imperial College Choir and met my wife, who was reading Applied Biology!

Could you give us one or more career tips for Imperial graduates?

I applied and was offered several jobs that I didn't take up; one at the end of my degree, and one at the end of my post-doc. Each of these would have taken me to a very different place, but each would have involved me using the same skills. I felt that the Imperial College name carried some weight. I ended up in a career that I never knew existed. As Biology becomes ever more important, I would urge others with similar skills to consider alternative pathways.

