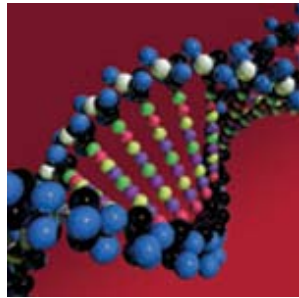


# Consultancies



Greg Mariano, MPH

Sandra Sulsky, MPH, PhD



# Introductions

- Greg
  - “Associate”
  - MPH
  - First full-time position (1 year experience)
  
- Sandy
  - “Senior Manager”
  - MPH, PhD
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> full-time position (24 years experience)



## Sandy's background

- Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University, Department of Epidemiology (1985-1990)
- Epidemiology Resources, Inc. (1990-1995)
- Assorted RAs (1995-2000)
- Mass DPH (1998-2000)
- Applied Epidemiology, Inc. (1999-2003)
- ENVIRON International Corporation (2003-present)



# What does a consultant epidemiologist do?

- Look for clients
- Identify and solve client problems
  - Support regulatory policy making
  - Evaluate policies
  - Support risk management decisions
  - Litigation support
- What does all that mean?
  - Primary research
  - Re-analysis of existing data
  - Critical review and synthesis of literature



# What must a consultant do well?

- Skills generally valued by consultancies:
  - Generating business
  - Building the reputation of the firm
- Ways to demonstrate these skills:
  - Calculating the amount of new and repeat business
  - Authoring scientific publications, presentations
  - Participating in national and international expert panels
- These skills translate to other types of jobs (ie., government and academic), but not neatly



# Pros and cons of being a consultant

## ■ Pros

- Variety of problems encourages flexibility of thought, creativity
- Not necessarily tied to academic/government grant cycles
- Meet, work with a wide range of professions: a lot of teaching about epidemiology

## ■ Cons

- Ability to specialize may be limited; need to multitask, manage competing schedules can be maddening
- Timelines may be uncomfortably short, subject to change; budget doesn't always fit task
- Requires a lot of teaching about epidemiology



# Political landscape

- Can be difficult to navigate concerns about conflict of interest - these are mostly misperceptions
- Important to communicate up-front with clients:
  - Ownership of data and work product
  - Decision making
  - Publication rights
- Sometimes difficult to get fair peer review
- Some limitations on activities (e.g., IARC)



# Greg's Background

- Student internships
  - New York State Office of the Attorney General, Environmental Protection Bureau (Summer 2005 & 2008)
  - US EPA (Summer 2007)
- Began the job search at start of final semester in the midst of the recession (Fall 2008)
- MPH from Columbia University with a concentration in Environmental and Molecular Epidemiology (December 2008)
- By mid January I had to decide between working for Federal or State govt. and working for ENVIRON





# Factors Considered

- Stability
- Salary/Benefits
- Location
- Variety
- Job description/duties
- Project Timeline
- Different from past experience?



# My Decision

- My Options:
  - State Government:  
Lower pay, specialized lab work, close to home, job stability,
  - Federal Government  
Great location but required rotations for first 2 years, job stability, policy related work, slightly lower pay.
  
- Why ENVIRON?
  - Great location, variety of projects, wanted to try something new, salary slightly higher than Federal govt. with comparable benefits and yearly bonus incentive, impression of decent job stability. Most importantly: job duties closely matched my concentration, goals and interests.



# My Experience So Far...

- Variety of projects
- Job feels secure
- Flexible schedule
- Using everything I learned in graduate school
- Continue to learn, expanding technical skills
- Great working relationship with superiors
- Individual and group work
- Future plans?



# Who should be a consultant?

- Consultancies are a good choice if you:
  - Like variety in scope of work and type of problems, are flexible
  - Are able to communicate technical information to non-tech audience
- Consultancies may not be the best choice if you:
  - Want to focus on teaching students
  - Want to focus on publishing (but companies vary)
  - Have or want a narrow specialty area
- If you want any part of your career to be academic, that should probably come first



## For more information

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