

## **TIBBS Career Blitz - January 2012**

### **Career Profile of a Scientist in Big Pharma: Richard A. Peterson II, D.V.M., Ph.D., Diplomate ACVP**

#### **What is your current title and how long have you worked in your current job?**

Director, Molecular and Ultrastructural Pathology (Toxicologic Pathologist). I have worked at GlaxoSmithKline in RTP, NC for 8 years.

#### **Where did you get your PhD and what discipline was it in?**

I received my Ph.D. from The Ohio State University, Department of Veterinary Biosciences. My Ph.D. was in Experimental Pathology.

#### **Did you do a postdoc?**

No, I did not do a post doc.

#### **What are your main daily responsibilities?**

Evaluating histopathology and electron microscopy on preclinical animal toxicity and mechanism of action studies, characterizing animal models of human diseases, toxicity and investigative study design, managing a “cutting-edge” investigative pathology laboratory at a major pharmaceutical company, and acting as a safety assessment project team member on drug development teams.

#### **What are the keys to success in your career field?**

Interdisciplinary team working with other biologists, chemists, toxicologists, business development staff, etc.; ability to multitask continuously (wearing numerous “hats”); consultative role with diverse groups; strong scientific and collaborative skills; building trust with team members.

#### **What were the most important factors in choosing your career path?**

Impactful; using my interest in medicine and biology to help patients (animal and/or human); an interdisciplinary discipline (comparative pathology/biology).

#### **What 1 or 2 pieces of advice do you have for people who want to land a job like yours?**

Commitment for pursuing a veterinary medical degree, veterinary pathology residency, Ph.D. and a rigorous board examination (up to 8-10 years in duration); with the shrinking of personnel numbers in the pharmaceutical industry due to

reductions in R&D budgets, the number of available positions are at a relatively low number at this time.

**Other scientific career opportunities in pharma (I will discuss these also):**

- Toxicologists [Ph.D. in Toxicology (i.e., UNC has a great interdisciplinary program)]
- Biologists [Ph.D. or M.S. in the biological sciences (e.g., molecular biology, virology, in vitro experience, system/disease specific experience, etc.)]
- Physicians [clinical specialists with experience in specific diseases (e.g., cancer, diabetes mellitus, HIV, diseases of aging, obesity, etc.)]
- Chemists [Ph.D. in organic chemistry/medicinal chemistry, experience in biopharmaceutical chemistry (small molecules, peptides, MoAbs, siRNA, fusion proteins, etc.)]