

The 2016 John A. Milner Fellowship Program – A Joint Activity of the USDA Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center (BHNRC) and the NIH Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS)

The BHNRC and ODS are pleased to announce the request for applications for the 2015 John A. Milner Fellowship Program. Postdoctoral fellows will conduct research in the area of bioactive components in foods and dietary supplements and learn about the translation of nutrition science into policy. This program is inspired by the life and work of Dr. John A. Milner, who, until his untimely death, was the Director of BHNRC. Dr. Milner devoted his career to expanding knowledge about the mechanisms of action and the health effects of bioactive components of foods, while in academia, at NIH, and at BHNRC. During his federal career, some of his most active collaborations were with ODS at NIH. As credit to his work, there continues to be a highly productive and scientifically relevant partnership between the ODS and BHNRC. It is fitting, therefore, that these two agencies are joining forces to celebrate Dr. Milner by encouraging the careers of junior scientists interested in bioactive components of foods and dietary supplements. The Fellowship will also allow candidates to develop experience and skill at the crossroads of science and policy. For those who knew Dr. Milner, he also supported and encouraged research endeavors to further the understanding of foods and their components as they impact health as well as the treatment of disease.

The purpose of the John A. Milner Fellowship Program is to create opportunities for early-career nutrition scientists (within 5 years of completing a PhD, DSc, MD, or other doctoral degrees) to strengthen their skills through two years of post-doctoral research, supplemented by training programs, peer-networking, and field learning experiences. The Fellows will work in world-class laboratories at the BHNRC, in close collaboration with scientists at ODS, to improve and expand their research skills and learn about the translation of nutrition science into nutrition policy. Mentorship will be provided by both BHNRC and ODS scientists.

The outcome would be to build a cadre of early-career investigators who can learn to:

- Build productive partnerships among government, academia, and the private sector; and
- Contribute and communicate scientific knowledge to problems of critical importance in nutrition and food utilization and/or production and availability.

The focus of Milner Fellows' research and activities will be characterized by:

- Cutting-edge research in bioactive components of foods and dietary supplements, including research on intake and interaction with health outcomes. An emphasis of this year's announcement is on human metabolic studies that will seek to examine the relationship between bioactive components and measures of health.

The overall objectives will be to enable the individual to:

- Define frontiers and lead the future of nutrition research;
- Become world leaders in nutrition research and application through training and mentorship; and
- Learn to build coalitions of organizations and partnerships to support research on food and its components.

Individuals who want to better link nutrition science with pressing policy needs and/or to link new technologies with nutrition research are encouraged to apply. We envision that the cadre of scientists supported by the John A. Milner Fellowship Program eventually will assume leadership positions across the field of nutrition, primarily in the science of components of foods and dietary supplements and the impact of evidence-based research on policies. Milner Fellows will be awarded two years of support.

Each Fellow will be mentored by:

- A BHNRC scientist who encourages the Fellow's continued scientific development; and
- An ODS scientist who helps the Fellow connect her/his research to practical policy challenges.

Applicants for the program will apply to work on a specific research project at BHNRC that is of mutual interest to both the ODS and BHNRC. **Potential applicants are required to contact potential mentors to develop a fellowship proposal.** Fellows will also be expected to spend time at ODS and attend their annual Dietary Supplement Research practicum and participate in relevant activities at ODS.

In addition, the International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) North America will provide additional learning opportunities for Fellows. ILSI North America is a nonprofit research foundation whose operational philosophy is built on academic, government and industry scientists working together in support of the health of the public. Dr. Milner served ILSI and its 16 branches worldwide for many years. Milner Fellows will be invited to participate in the annual and mid-year meetings of ILSI North America. As appropriate, Fellows may also have the opportunity to participate in ILSI North America program activities that align with their post-doctoral research program.

Although initially set up between ODS and BHNRC, other Institutes and Centers at NIH and Centers in ARS would be encouraged to participate.

Eligibility and Award Terms

To be eligible, individuals, including foreign nationals without permanent residency status, must have completed their doctorate within the past five years, or by the time the award is made. Applicants who have not yet completed their doctorate must clearly indicate on the application the date their degree is expected.

Each Fellow will receive an annual salary at the appropriate level for his/her training and experience. All applicable benefits will be included as defined by the organization providing the fellowship. The post-doctoral position is expected to run for two consecutive years.

Application Materials

All materials must be submitted electronically in PDF or MS Word format to Dr. Thomas Wang (tom.wang@ars.usda.gov), who acts as the contact person on behalf of the BHNRC Director. Materials may be submitted in separate files or all in one file (PDF's of one file preferred). Please include your last name in some part of the file name (e.g. TomWang.pdf). Letters sent on your behalf

should also include your last name and the sender's last name in some part of the file name. Research approaches may include experimental or observational studies, human or animal studies, or any combination. In all cases, the central questions of the inquiry must be clearly articulated. Proposed study sites must be noted; an explanation of how the results will inform nutrition science is required. The research plan must not under any circumstances exceed 8 pages. The cover letter, literature cited, personal statement, and curriculum vitae are not included in the 8-page limit. Font size must be at least 11 point; margins must be at least 2.5 cm; line spacing must be at least 1.5. Deviations from these requirements may be grounds for disqualification.

1. **Cover Letter:** Applicants should provide a compelling narrative of her/his interest in nutrition science and policy, evidence of leadership and innovation, and how the fellowship could facilitate a unique and interdisciplinary plan for professional development. Applicants should not use cover letters to restate or extend material presented in the proposal or personal statement. Thoughtful, well-crafted cover letters improve the likelihood that competitive proposals will be identified during the initial stages of proposal evaluation.
2. **Title Page:** Include applicant's name, contact information, project title, and potential BHNRC sponsor (if known).
3. **Research Plan:** The 8-page research plan should include the following:
 - a) Abstract;
 - b) Background section;
 - c) Statement of objectives;
 - d) Approaches and methods;
 - e) Anticipated results; and
 - f) Relevance to nutrition science and policy
4. **Applicant's Curriculum Vitae**
5. **Personal Statement:** Please address the following points (<200 words each):
 - a) Give an example or examples of an accomplishment you believe demonstrates your leadership skills or entrepreneurial abilities.
 - b) How your research is "cutting edge" or innovative? And
 - c) What will be the greatest anticipated impact of your research? Who or what will be most greatly affected?
6. Three (3) letters of recommendation addressing the merits of the candidate and the candidate's proposal. Letters should be written by individuals familiar with the applicant's skills, experience, and research. Where appropriate, letters should emphasize any unique abilities of the applicant that will contribute significantly to the science of bioactive compounds in food. Each letter writer must submit an electronic copy of their letter to Dr. Thomas Wang (tom.wang@ars.usda.gov). It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that reference letters are submitted by the deadline.

Deadlines and Contact Information

All application materials, including letters from sponsors and references, must be received by **October 1, 2016**. The selection process begins immediately after this date. There are no extensions to this deadline and incomplete applications may be disqualified. Questions about the application process may be directed to Dr. Thomas Wang (tom.wang@ars.usda.gov).

Selection Criteria, Process, and Notification

Evaluation of the fellowship applications will be conducted by an ad-hoc committee composed of five established scientists, outside of ODS and BHNRC, whose expertise lies within the broad field of nutrition.

Fellows are selected according to three criteria: 1) professional record; 2) perceived potential for innovation and leadership; and 3) the strength of their proposal. An ideal Milner Fellow is an innovative researcher with strong leadership potential. He or she will have excellent communication skills and a keen interest in the interface between research and policy in nutrition. The ideal proposal will clearly articulate concepts and objectives that are both innovative and feasible. U.S. citizenship is not required.

Preference will be given to innovative proposals that create a link between USDA and NIH research activities. Applicants will be ranked and the Directors of the BHNRC and ODS will make the award based on strengths and alignment with the objectives of the program.

Selection will be made by 1 December 2016. Dr. Wang will notify candidates of their status of their application within a week after selection. Because of staff limitations, we are unable to provide a written critique of proposals. Funds are available for Fellows to start 1 January 2016 or soon thereafter.