

2014 AAAS SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING MASS MEDIA FELLOW

RACHEL ZAMZOW

DEGREE: PH.D. STUDENT, INTERDISCIPLINARY NEUROSCIENCE, EXPECTED MAY 2016
SCHOOL: UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
SPONSOR: BURROUGHS WELLCOME FUND
MEDIA SITE: PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Research Focus: Autism spectrum disorder from the perspectives of pharmacological intervention and underlying functional network organization

Translation: One of my primary research areas involves exploring the effects of a beta-blocker on social outcomes in individuals with autism, as well as using measurements of stress reactivity to predict treatment response. I also study how the brains of individuals with autism are organized to process information using a specific type of neuroimaging analysis that treats the brain as a functional network.

What are your goals for the summer?

My goal for the summer is to learn how to effectively communicate complex scientific ideas in a clear manner, while simultaneously considering the diverse knowledge inherent in the general public.

What are you most excited about?

I'm most excited about working in a fast-paced, real-world newsroom in an exciting city like Philadelphia. I can't wait to get my first story



assignment, interview my first source, and meet (not miss!) my first deadline.

Why are you passionate about science communication?

I feel it is imperative for scientists to actively share about their work, garnering not only public interest, but even support, in terms of what goes on in the lab. The communication gap between technical jargon-wielding scientists and the curious yet sometimes skeptical public must be

eliminated in order to move the field of science forward.

Who is your favorite science communicator?

I truly admire Emily Willingham, a science writer for Forbes and a variety of other publications. She writes about science that affects the public, especially research on autism, with a keen, critical reporting style. She also brings a personal touch to her writing, making her stories engaging as well as highly informed.

“THE COMMUNICATION GAP BETWEEN TECHNICAL JARGON-WIELDING SCIENTISTS AND THE CURIOUS YET SOMETIMES SKEPTICAL PUBLIC MUST BE ELIMINATED IN ORDER TO MOVE THE FIELD OF SCIENCE FORWARD.”

Do you have a link to an article you'd like to share?

Here's a link to a piece I wrote on the usefulness of Twitter as a science communication tool and why scientists should not shy away from it:
<http://neurolore.wordpress.com/2013/08/13/we-need-more-rapunzels-in-the-ivory-tower/>

Describe your dream job.

As I am passionate about autism research, I would love to spend my career serving as a liaison between scientists and the community of individuals with autism and their families. I believe I can use both my scientific and communication training to provide helpful explanations of current autism research to inform decisions and instill understanding about the trust of science.

Tell us about something you do outside of the lab.

If I'm not in lab, you can find me catching a movie with my husband or grabbing coffee with friends. I also enjoy searching through local antique malls for treasures that I can turn into DIY projects around the house.

Anything else you'd like to share?

Favorite animal: Capybara. I've been in love with these adorable giant rodents since I did a project about them in fourth grade. I love any and all things Texas, so I'm on a constant quest for quality Tex-Mex and BBQ no matter where I am.