

So, in 2012, I started a postdoc in the United States with Kathleen Donohue, a biologist at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. Kathleen and I got along very well from the start, and I made strong connections with other international colleagues. My husband found a good job, our extended family visited a lot and we kept in touch using Skype and WhatsApp. It also turned out that two years old was the right age for my daughter to move to another country. She speaks English like she's a local and she loves to travel.

We returned to Argentina in 2017. Last year, I won lab space at the University of Buenos Aires to start my own group. My international experience made me more competitive when applying for the position. People who go abroad can find that it opens the door to opportunity in Argentina.

**“I worry that it can be dangerous to give the impression that moving is important at all costs. It is complicated.”**

My time at Duke also led to my latest stay abroad — a five-month project at the Japan National Agriculture and Food Research Organization in Tsukuba, where I collaborated with a visiting scholar

whom I had worked with at Duke. I arrived in September last year, and my family came in December for my daughter's summer holiday.

Collaborating with people of disparate nationalities and with varying styles of work has informed what I want to gain from my own lab at home. I want to work with people from different backgrounds, who are doing strong lines of research and who collaborate with and complement each other. I don't want the kind of lab in which one person has only one project and doesn't interact with anyone else.

My top tip: people who have a family and are contemplating a move should make sure that everyone in their family will benefit. Once you're in the new place, find support groups. ■

#### INTERVIEWS BY VIRGINIA GEWIN

These interviews have been edited for length and clarity.

#### CORRECTION

The Careers feature ‘The call of home’ (*Nature* 566, 143–145; 2019) erroneously stated that the study of scientists across Africa was conducted by the Global Young Academy. The survey was in fact co-led by Catherine Beaudry at Canada's Polytechnique Montréal.

## TURNING POINT Community builder

*Isobel Williams, a clinical neuroscientist at the University of Sheffield, UK, is a founding member of the Disabled and Ill Researchers' Network at the same institution. As a researcher with a long-term health condition, she has helped to build a support group and community for disabled PhD students, postdoctoral researchers and faculty members.*

#### How does your condition affect your life?

I've had juvenile idiopathic arthritis, an autoimmune disease with no known cause, since I was four years old. After I received my undergraduate degree from the University of Sheffield, it got so bad that I had to take a year out to get both of my hips replaced. I am in pain every day and expect to need further surgeries because of the arthritis. Sometimes, I experience a flare-up — transient worsening of my symptoms — that can last for a day or even weeks.

#### Has your condition influenced your career?

After I earned a master's degree in cognitive neuroscience at Birkbeck, University of London, I gained clinical experience as a carer. I then returned to Sheffield to study medically unexplained neurological disorders, including psychogenic non-epileptic seizures, and how they relate to emotional and psychological factors. I'm keenly aware of the links between emotional and physical health, and bring a perspective to this research that others might not have. I'm working on a clinical trial that is looking at whether a nutritional intervention can prolong life in people with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (also known as motor neuron disease). I'd like to pursue work as a clinical psychologist alongside my research. I'm particularly interested in helping people who have functional and movement disorders.

#### Would you consider moving to another country?

I would love to work abroad. The main barrier to that is my health. I see a general practitioner regularly, take medications and consult a specialist twice a year — I rely heavily on the UK National Health Service to keep me going. If someone offered me a dream postdoc position in the United States, for example, I would consider it, but would have real concerns about health insurance — specifically, what my pre-existing conditions would mean for the type of health coverage that I could afford.

#### Have you experienced any discrimination?

Sheffield is a great place with a lovely work environment and existing support structures, but there is a general lack of awareness about disability that is not unique to the institution. For



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example, I have a disabled-parking permit, but people leave notes on my car that say I shouldn't be parking in a space for disabled people.

#### How did the Disabled and Ill Researchers' Network form?

I was ranting about these types of encounter at the pub with a colleague, Kay Guccione, who had already helped to set up networks for postgraduate parents and for researchers whose work is emotionally demanding. She helped to bring together PhD students who have disabilities. There are now around 50 of us, and we're still growing. We meet every three months and have a Google community and an e-mail list. We also share our experiences on social media using the hashtags #chronicallyacademic or #PhDisabled. The idea is to provide peer support, so that members know that there are others like them out there. Higher education has conventionally been able-bodied, but we now have more diversity, and that includes disabilities. We are working with the university administration at Sheffield to improve the process of applying for health-related leaves of absence for those with a chronic condition.

#### What is your advice for people who wish to create a similar network at their institution?

Create a website for the network, and invite people at your university who have a disability or illness to write a piece about their experiences of managing their PhD or postdoc. Because many conditions can be hidden, I also advise students, no matter where they are studying, to disclose their condition to their advisers and to set up boundaries and reasonable adjustments — for example, the need for regular breaks during the day or ruling out weekend work — that are necessary to protect their health. I'd also like people to feel comfortable with their disability. It's a sign of strength to have got this far in academia while facing extra obstacles.

#### INTERVIEW BY VIRGINIA GEWIN

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.