

My Life In Science (so far, so good).

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Studying in four continents under some of the biggest names in sport/exercise science, having the opportunity to meet great people who have become lifelong friends (one of whom I married), travelling the world to talk at conferences, and doing a job that doesn't even feel like work most of the time! I sure didn't sign up for this all those years ago when I left New Zealand and headed back to the U.K. to start my first stint at Loughborough University. A little-known fact: I returned to Loughborough after my undergraduate degree and qualified as an economics teacher with a minor in physical education. I was assigned (randomly, but probably not double-blind), to undertake my three-month teaching practice at the very high school I attended before my parents emigrated to the other side of the world! To my shock and horror, I returned to find that many of my old teachers were still alive, although barely teaching. During my three months hard labour, it became clear very quickly that this was incredibly hard work, and I decided then and there that there must be easier way to earn a living.

The basic academic facts are these: I obtained my bachelor's degree from Loughborough University in the United Kingdom working under Professor Clyde Williams, my Master's degree from Ball State University in the U.S.A. working for Professor David Costill, and my Ph.D. and post-doctoral training at the University of Cape Town Medical School, South Africa, working with Professor Tim Noakes. During my time in Cape Town, I was also the Director of the Sports Science Institute of South Africa where I worked closely with elite athletes from a wide variety of sports in preparation for Olympic and World Championship competition.

If I look through my PUBMED history, I can see that my scientific legacy will probably reflect that I was involved in far too many studies of carbohydrate metabolism! But at some stage it must have dawned on me that there are only so many carbohydrate-beverage formulations you can study, or dietary practices you can manipulate to alter substrate metabolism and impact exercise performance. More to the point, there are only so many industry partners willing to fund such research, and so it was time for a change. Around this time an older and wiser head suggested that I 'follow the money' and think about reinventing my research focus and that of my research group. So, there was a subtle shift in focus, and I started to work with several populations at risk for chronic lifestyle-induced metabolic conditions, with the only stipulation that I would attack these problems through primary (exercise and nutritional) strategies and not pharmacological therapies. A decade later that transition has become reality, and the work we are

currently undertaking in my lab is still fun and rewarding and has led to new and fertile areas of research such as circadian biology and how the timing of exercise and meals can positively impact metabolic health.

So, what have I learned during my 'life in science?' What words of wisdom can I impart on the bright young minds who are currently working in the fields of exercise and nutritional sciences, who will take the baton and ensure that our research is taken seriously, has translational value and impacts on the wider community? Here are my top 10 tips (in no particular order):

- 1) Choose your supervisor(s) carefully and be part of a bigger team
- 2) Collaborate with people you like to hang out with (and in Ron's case, share a beer with)
- 3) Read widely, and outside of your specialist area of research
- 4) Don't become too specialized, too early on in your career
- 5) Embrace new technologies (or make friends with someone who knows them)
- 6) Don't be afraid to ask questions (someone else in the room is probably wondering about the same thing)
- 7) Never be the smartest person in a room (easier for some than others)
- 8) Take risks
- 9) Be humble and proud of your achievements
- 10) Be passionate about what you do, aim high, and have fun!

I consider myself to be incredibly fortunate to be standing in front of you, sharing some of my scientific experiences: without a doubt, the journey over the past decades has been rewarding beyond my wildest expectations. My final destination has been reached: I am currently the Director of the Mary MacKillop Institute for Health Research and Head of the Exercise and Nutrition Research Program at the Australian Catholic University in Melbourne, Australia, where I have far too many staff, far too many meetings, and far too much administration to deal with. Many times these days, I dream of just drifting off into the sunset and slowing down, but then find out that my wife has planned several more iterations of her 'Supernova' series of studies (we have had the movie, the DVD and are now onto the musical), and has planned the next five years of our lives down to the day! However, despite new and challenging demands on my time, I still find time to train daily in an attempt to keep my maximal oxygen uptake close to my age. While I am losing that battle, I feel I did win the war!