

Technology transfer and postdoc entrepreneurs

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Post-doctoral researchers see their role as being vital in technology transfer where scientific findings become useful to the local economy, but most have little interest in running their own business once their research fellowship ends. That's the surprising finding of a study published in the *International Journal of Knowledge-Based Development*.

Edmund Zolnik, a public policy specialist at the George Mason University, in Arlington, Virginia, has surveyed postdoctoral fellows in the US National Capital Region. He found that most saw technology transfer as an important part of research. However, only a few were actively preparing for self-employment and of those initial wealth was a distinguishing factor. Zolnik suggests that educational courses and programs should be emphasized that give postdoctoral fellows insights into entrepreneurial career tracks and offer them the option to be mentored early in their transition from apprentice to entrepreneur.

The Bayh-Dole Act of 1980 was the first spur to encouraging the flow of technology from national laboratories and universities into the commercial sector but 30 years later, the number of spin-offs from laboratories remains lower than expected despite the tens of billions of dollars that are invested each year in research by the federal government. Zolnik suggests that more recent [empirical evidence](#) does suggest that technology transfer from national laboratories has improved but there is still a considerable lag.

The primary focus of studies as to why there is such a lag has until now

focused on what technology is transferred rather than how and by whom it is transferred from the academic to the commercial world.

Zolnik explains that as the home to many national laboratories and universities at the forefront of scientific advancements, a study of "postdocs" and their impact on [technology transfer](#) in the National Capital Region could provide useful insights into what is preventing the [commercialization](#) of research.

More information: "The role of postdoctoral fellows in technology transfer: evidence from the National Capital Region of the USA" in *Int. J. Knowledge-Based Development*, 2010, 1, 158-175

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