Joanna Gerry-Paul
Associate Director Quality Assurance (GCP)
Ionis Pharmaceuticals

Education Background:
University of California, Irvine (upper division studies abroad through Northern Arizona University and U of Granada, Spain)—Bachelor of Science in Biological Science
University of California, Los Angeles—Masters in Public Health
George Washington University—Post-Graduate Certification in Healthcare Compliance

Current Job Tasks:
I assure compliance with global regulations for the conduct of human clinical trials.

Favorite Thing About Their Job:
I enjoy identifying how processes can be improved especially as they affect health care.

Piece of Advice:
Keep learning. Regulations and technology change constantly. Its fun!!! Also, get a job! It may not be exactly what you want, but while you explore and search for what you feasibly COULD do, having an ACTUAL job will teach you more than you realize. Most jobs have less to do with education and more to do with your communication, collaboration skills, and leadership.

Michelle Hernandez
R&D Research Associate
Q2 Lab Solutions

Education Background:
University of California, Riverside—Bachelor of Science in Biology 2010
University of California, Irvine—Master of Science in Biological Sciences 2014

Current Job Tasks:
I develop, qualify, and validate assays for vaccine clinical trials according to FDA standards.

Favorite Thing About Their Job:
I get to do something different almost every day. I am afforded the freedom to test and plan different parts of the assays which can be daunting but it challenges me to continue to use my critical thinking skills.

Piece of Advice:
Take opportunities to learn lab techniques early in your academic career. Keep an eye on trends in biotech to figure out where to focus your efforts. Techniques and assays go in and out of style so knowing the right techniques at the right time could land you a job sooner.
Erica Rifat
Chemistry Technologist IV
North American Science Associates, Inc. (NAMSA)

Education Background:
University of California, Irvine—Bachelor of Science in Chemistry with a concentration in Biochemistry (2004)

Current Job Tasks:
I am a Chemist in the Analytical Services department at a Medical Research Organization. We are a small contract lab, and we test medical devices. We help clients get their devices through different government regulations and help them submit their final product design so that they can be used in surgery and help save someone’s life.

Favorite Thing About Their Job:
The job is always different. I do something different every single day. It can be stressful, but receiving an email from a client who has worked ten years on a device that is finally able to be sold, or seeing pictures of a surgery that is using a medical device that we’ve tested makes my job rewarding.

Piece of Advice:
Enjoy and really learn in your labs; the lessons you learn there will be invaluable for your career. Always keep the option of going back to school to get a higher degree open. If working right away isn’t for you, go to grad school!