“Diverse and ambitious environment at SciLifeLab”

SciLifeLab, Science for Life Laboratory, is a Swedish research center within molecular biosciences with focus on health and environment. To further strengthen the research environment at SciLifeLab the center regularly recruits young, talented research leaders to become SciLifeLab fellows. Each fellow is recruited by one of the center host universities and receives funding from them.

One of the SciLifeLab fellows is Jens Carlsson, who was recruited by Uppsala University/SciLifeLab from Stockholm University, Sweden, in 2015. After finishing his postdoctoral research at the University of California in San Francisco, Jens Carlsson returned to Sweden where he was born.

“I received a start-up grant from a Swedish foundation that gave me the opportunity to build up an independent research group at Stockholm University. I wanted to return to Sweden because family life, with two small children, became very complicated in the US. In Sweden, we are spoiled with generous parental leave and subsidized day care – life is easier here”

Photo: Håkan Lindgren

Jens Carlsson

“I was working at the Stockholm node of SciLifeLab when I applied for the fellows position. It is a wonderful place that connected me to the other universities represented at the center in ways that had not happened before. The relatively young community at SciLifeLab creates a high ambition level and the international recruitment has given rise to a great and diverse environment, which I think will benefit research in Sweden for many years to come.”

Looking to recruit more people

Jens Carlsson’s research focuses on the family of G-Protein Coupled Receptors (GPCRs). He uses computer models of these receptors to understand how they work at the atomic level. As GPCRs are important drug targets, Jens and his colleagues also design small molecules that modulate receptor activity.

“Around 30-40% of all drugs target GPCRs so more or less everyone will take one of these at some point in their life.” Jens Carlsson said. “Instead of testing millions of molecules experimentally as they do in the pharmaceutical industry, we can screen them on a super computer center over night and identify the most promising candidates at essentially no cost.”

Jens Carlsson’s first PhD student recently graduated and today his group consists of five researchers. He is now looking to recruit more students.

“I just had an interview with a candidate who I hope will be the first in my group to do experimental work. This will be very exciting because it will give me the possibility to quickly test computational predictions experimentally and thereby explore many new ideas.”

SciLifeLab – a national resource

SciLifeLab is a Swedish research center within molecular biosciences with focus on health and environment. It is also a national center with the mission to develop, use and provide advanced technologies. The center infrastructure encompasses a multitude of biomolecular technologies and bioinformatics services. National funding makes SciLifeLab’s services and expertise available to researchers in all of Sweden.

The center is a joint effort by four Swedish universities (Karolinska Institutet, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm University and Uppsala University). Founded in 2010, the center today encompasses more than 1 200 researchers mainly located in and around the two center nodes in Stockholm and Uppsala.

SciLifeLab

www.scilifelab.se