

LMG fellow begins independent career in Israel

By Monica Frazier

Former NIEHS Laboratory of Molecular Genetics (LMG) postdoc Shay Covo, Ph.D., began a new career in June as an assistant professor at [The Hebrew University of Jerusalem](http://new.huji.ac.il/en/) (HUJ) in Israel.

Covo will create his laboratory in the Department of Plant Pathology and Microbiology and work among the Faculty of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Quality Sciences located in Rehovot. Covo will be comfortable in his new location, near the Weizmann Institute of Science where he completed his Ph.D. research on double-strand breaks and repair of lesions in DNA.

Linked Audio

[Listen to an interview with Resnick about his group's research that found a link between DNA damage and immune response \(02:31\)](#)

Transitioning from postdoc to lead researcher

While a member of the Chromosome Stability Group, led by lead researcher [Michael Resnick, Ph.D.](#), Covo worked on defects in sister chromatid cohesion and genome instability in yeast.

"Shay had unique and creative insights that led to the development of new concepts about the role of sister chromatids in protection against genome change. He was a continual source of ideas, a welcome critic, and a wonderful colleague and collaborator with other members of the lab," Resnick said.

At HUJ, Covo will focus his group's study on genome instability in plant pathogens, and will continue his work with yeast, to address mechanisms that maintain genome stability normally and in response to environmental challenges.

Covo was known among the members of LMG for his many useful comments during seminars. Resnick added that, in addition to Covo's broad research interests, his ability to encourage and teach trainees, including high school students, in the lab, were among the traits that would lead to his success as a mentor.

"Shay is a natural-born researcher and teacher, showing tremendous patience, diligence, and passion for each project," Resnick noted.

Finding your niche

NIEHS attracted Covo as the perfect place to carry out his postdoctoral research, because of his interest in DNA repair, and the many experts in the field whose work he was already familiar with, including Resnick. However, the benefits of NIEHS went far beyond mastering technical skills.

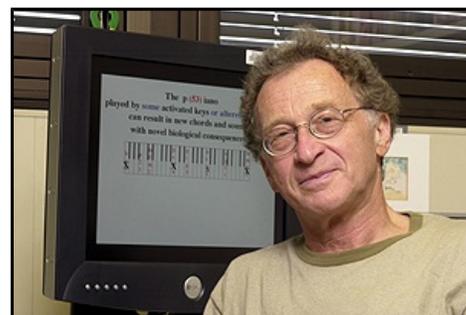
Covo described participation in the LMG seminar series and retreats as some of the most beneficial experiences he had while at NIEHS. Most importantly, he credited the unique viewpoint he adopted on molecular and cellular processes while at NIEHS with preparing him for taking on his own laboratory.

Covo encouraged other trainees to be creative with their research interests, and to try to find their own niche. He commented, "I thought that after so many years of research, I was fixed on a specific direction, but I was able to twist my research program into a completely different direction."

(Monica Frazier, Ph.D., is an Intramural Research Training Award fellow in the NIEHS Mechanisms of Mutation Group.)



Covo also shared his passion for science with high school students, during North Carolina DNA Day (see [story](#)). He was known, among colleagues, for his delightful sense of humor. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



Mentor Resnick (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)

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(bruskec@niehs.nih.gov)

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