

January 2018 Member Highlight Interview for ASN Nutrition Notes eNewsletter:

Interview with Jack Odle, Ph.D., William Neal Reynolds Distinguished Professor in the Department of Animal Science at North Carolina State University and Editor-in-Chief of Current Developments in Nutrition.

Dr. Odle received his Ph.D. in Nutritional Biochemistry from the University of Wisconsin in 1989. He was an Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois until 1995 and then joined the Department of Animal Science at North Carolina State University, where he was named William Neal Reynolds Distinguished Professor in 2005. He has served as Counselor for the American Society for Nutrition (2005-08), Associate Editor for *The Journal of Nutrition* (1999-2005) and Associate Editor for *Advances in Nutrition* (2010-16). Dr. Odle received the New Frontiers in Animal Nutrition Award from the Federation of Animal Science Societies in 2014 and he currently serves as Editor-In-Chief for *Current Developments in Nutrition*, ASN's full open access journal launched in January 2017.



1. How did you first get involved in nutritional biochemistry and research? What made you interested in the field of nutrition science?

My interests in nutrition and in research were seeded early in my undergraduate years at Purdue. I worked at the University feedmill as a student employee. I helped prepare experimental diets that nutrition researchers used in their projects. As my classroom knowledge grew, I became increasingly intrigued with the questions posed by the researchers. This culminated in me designing and conducting my own project during my senior year. After that experience, I was hooked for life! I also vividly recall taking my first biochemistry class. I was fascinated to study the chemistry of life and recall the sense of enlightenment that inspired me to follow my passion and to pursue graduate studies at Wisconsin where I could deepen my training in Nutritional Biochemistry.

2. When and why did you first join ASN? What convinced you to join the organization?

An important part of research involves sharing your work with peers and colleagues who can be constructively critical and who can challenge you with their own research insights. I found this group of peers within ASN when I became a student member in the mid 1980's. Since then, as a professor and student mentor, it has been a joy for me to introduce new students to the ASN professional network and to see the inspiration they gain from it.

3. What aspects of ASN membership have you found most useful, professionally? What other aspects of your membership do you find useful as your career has progressed?

The easy answer to this is the top-rated collection of nutrition journals that ASN publishes. AJCN, JN, AN & CDN showcase the high-quality science of the ASN membership and the high impact of our flagship journals is in part a reflection of the longstanding leadership of ASN within the global nutrition community. These journals are where nutrition scholarship lives. I've had the distinct pleasure of serving in an editorial capacity for several of these journals and this experience has been extremely valuable to my career. Another value of membership is the opportunity to contribute to the society through various committees, research interest group activities and leadership roles. The society also sponsors many awards which codify career achievements, and I can emphatically say that the respect of one's peers that is afforded by such awards is deeply gratifying. The annual meetings also offer an opportunity to connect with new, current and former colleagues and friends—this fellowship and collegiality can foster life-long relationships that are priceless.

4. What aspects of your research do you foresee being most important for ASN members?

As an animal nutritionist, I am both an AGRICULTURALIST and a NUTRITIONIST. Accordingly, my research also has relevance to the broader food system. Projections indicate that global food production needs to double within the next 30 years. Supplying wholesome nutrition on this scale represents a grand challenge for the nutrition and agricultural communities. Increasingly, we need to frame our knowledge of healthy nutrition within the context of food production, i.e., agriculture.

5. Can you tell us more about your current position and the research activities in which you are involved?

I am a professor of animal nutrition within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at North Carolina State University with responsibilities in graduate teaching and research. My research program focuses primarily on the “Nutritional Biochemistry of the Neonate.” We use piglets as a model for the human infant and examine problems relevant to both production agriculture and medical science. I call this agri-medical research. Basic science within my lab has emphasis on developmental aspects of lipid nutrition and metabolism at the molecular, cellular and whole-animal levels. Other research examines impacts of dietary carnitine and medium-chain triglycerides and effects of prebiotics and polyunsaturated fatty acids on development of the neonatal intestine.

6. What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing nutrition researchers today? Are there any areas where you would like to see more research?

The rapidly expanding global population poses a daunting challenge to our food producing systems, and the nutrition community needs to collaborate and engage to help educate, refine and transform these systems to provide a wholesome and healthy food supply. Concurrent afflictions of obesity and malnutrition around the globe illustrate the divergent challenges that coexist—grand challenges that nutritionists need to help address. Because of the many facets of nutritional science, I believe that novel opportunities exist where nutrition interfaces with allied disciplines.

7. Is there anything else you'd like to tell students and postdocs within ASN?

- Sustained passion, hard work and creativity will propel your career.
- Collaborating with equally committed colleagues can produce creative synergy and can make research extra fun—seek out training environments that encourage this.
- If you value your colleagues, you will take time to be constructively critical of their work.
- You may learn as much by mentoring junior colleagues as you learn from your senior mentors, so don't hesitate to pay it forward.
- Habits that impact work-life balance take root early in your professional development and are difficult to change as life progresses.