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My laboratory studies the molecular biology of colorectal cancer development. Specifically, we study a hereditary disease called Lynch syndrome in which patients have a greatly increased risk of developing colonic and other cancers. We are interested in how mutations that cause this disease affect the function of their encoded proteins and the implications this has for disease diagnosis and management.

The extraordinary fringe rates for our research staff are an issue on multiple fronts. For starters, our personnel costs are nearly double that of my out of state collaborators. Since NIH grants have a set budget limit for a standard R01 (a value that hasn’t changed in over 15 years), that basically means we have to work with less staff and less research supplies than other labs around the country. Second, this also impacts recruitment of new faculty. One specific story involved the recruitment of a new basic science chair to UConn Health. I was called in to meet with a candidate in my role as Director of Postdoctoral Affairs because the candidate had heard about our high fringe rates and wanted to confirm it was true. Sadly, I had to tell this candidate they had heard correctly. The candidate astutely pointed out that this likely explained why many of the labs they had visited had so few people working in them. I cannot say with certainty that this person was the top choice for the position or whether this was a deciding factor in that person not coming here, but it clearly is a major negative for UCH when attempting to hire new, outstanding faculty. The cost of doing business here is uncompetitively high, driven almost exclusively by the fringe rates.