Weonmee **Park** MIP '08

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A native of Seoul, Korea, Weonmee Park MIP '08 worked as a patent attorney at YOU ME Patent & Law Firm, one of Korea's largest patent firms, prior to enrolling at Pierce Law.

As member of the YOU ME's Chemical, Pharmaceutical and Biotech Group, Park represented domestic and foreign clients on issues relating to patent validity, patent infringement and patent prosecution before the Korean Intellectual Property Office (KIPO). She successfully prosecuted more than 200 cases before KIPO, mostly relating to biotechnology invention. She also provided consultations on Korean patent law and examination practices and worked closely with foreign associates, mostly in Japan, Europe and the United States, to procure patents in the corresponding countries for her Korean clients.

Earlier in her career, Park conducted scientific research in the area of gene therapy for solid tumors such as ovarian cancer at the Samsung Biomedical Research Institute from 1994–1997. While at Samsung, she also collaborated with Seoul National University Genetic Engineering Center.

"Gene therapy was in its infancy at that time and we had to start from scratch. Our work involved the development of a viral vector suitable for gene therapy of cancer. We used adenoviruses as a vector to deliver a gene of interest such as tumor suppressor genes to target cancer cells. The experiment involved in-vitro cell testing, as well as animal testing of the adenoviral vectors generated. The project is currently in the preparation stage for a clinical trial."

Park's background in the sciences is extensive. She earned a BA in biology in 1987 from Seoul National University and a PhD from the University of Southern California in molecular biology in 1994.

Park left Samsung in 1997 to work as a genetic analyst specialist at Applied Biosystems in Seoul, a Korean branch of a multinational biotech company.

"Applied Biosystems is a major provider of DNA analysis/detection and amplification systems and provided almost all the instruments and materials to complete the first working draft of the human genome in June 2000," explains Park. "This company is also a pioneer and major provider in human identification."

"I worked closely with customers, most recently scientists from biotech companies, universities and government laboratories, to analyze data generated using the genetic analysis instruments provided by Applied Biosystems," says Park.

"I was constantly exposed to new emerging technologies, where molecular biology played an indispensable part in the genomic era. The research I was involved in was diverse, and ranged from pure scientific research to find genes to understand the underlying molecular mechanisms for certain biological phenomena, to practical applications such as the identification of criminals, accident victims and paternity tests.

"More importantly, at this time, I started to develop an interest in inventions and patents. Almost every single product provided by Applied Biosystems, whether it was a $100 consumable or a $300,000 instrument, was an aggregate of innovations/inventions, most of which were protected by patents."

"Several of the people I had worked with were graduates of Pierce Law. They had all impressed me with the quality of their work and their understanding and knowledge of intellectual property," comments Park.

"I have met some wonderful professors here, and have made many good friends from all over the world—Singapore, Taiwan, China, India, Japan, Argentina, Brazil and Africa—who I will cherish forever. And last but not least, I am armed with a more comprehensive understanding of intellectual property rights," says Park.

After graduation, Park hopes to be involved more in harvesting and discovering valuable inventions/innovations, particularly in biotech areas, and turning them into valuable assets.

"I think the personalized medicine may be one of the most beneficial results of the human genome research and the immense amount of human genetic data that has been collected so far may be used to create new methods in treating human disorders," explains Park. "I would like to be part of it."

Park lives in Seoul with her husband Minhwa Chung. They have a son, Younjoon, who attended ninth grade at Concord High School while Park was at Pierce Law. Park enjoys reading scientific novels, particularly those written by Michael Crichton and Robin Cook, and hopes one day to translate one of their books into Korean and write one of her own. She is currently seeking work in Korea and the United States.