

A photograph of two men in a laboratory setting. The man on the left, wearing glasses and a black shirt, is gesturing with his right hand. The man on the right, with curly hair, glasses, and a mustache, is wearing an orange shirt and has his arms crossed. They are facing each other in conversation. The background is a blurred laboratory with shelves and equipment.

# Naturally Obsessed

*The Making of a Scientist*

1 x 56 HD



**PBS**

INTERNATIONAL

# Naturally Obsessed

The Making of a Scientist

1 x 56 HD

---

## CONTACT

Tom Koch, Vice President  
PBS International  
10 Guest Street  
Boston, MA 02135 USA

TEL: +1-617-208-0735  
FAX: +1-617-208-0783

jtkoch@pbs.org  
pbsinternational.org

Mixing humor with heartbreak, *Naturally Obsessed: The Making of a Scientist* tells an intensely dramatic story about a trio of irrepressible student scientists who are guided through the emotional ups and downs of a PhD training program by a tough but genial mentor. The film was shot for over three years in the Molecular Biology laboratory of Columbia University Medical Center in New York City.

Graduate students working under the supervision of Dr. Lawrence Shapiro are in a race to beat worldwide competition to decipher the molecular structure and workings of the protein AMPK, a protein that controls the burning and storage of fat. Knowledge of how to regulate the activity of AMPK may contribute to new treatments for pathological obesity and type 2 diabetes.

Shapiro, as lab head and mentor, has to strike a balance between doing grant-worthy research and providing his graduate students with the support they need on their way to the PhD degree. Each student works on a research project that contributes towards Shapiro's overall investigative agenda, which requires that they master the exceedingly challenging technique of x-ray crystallography. By means of x-ray crystallography, either they will produce a convincing three-dimensional atomic model of a protein, or, despite years of effort, they will fail to produce any usable result at all.

Dr. Shapiro, the young professor who heads the lab, is an off-beat academic who played hooky from high school so he could work in a research lab. His students are like family to him and he cares passionately about passing the baton of science on to the next generation. Graduate student Robert, a rebellious perennial dropout, is making his last-ditch stand in the lab; Kilpatrick, apparently self-confident, is deeply troubled over whether his future lies in academia or in business; and Gabrielle, insecure in her own commitment, questions if she can stay the course. The film chronicles the students as they gradually came to understand themselves, their ambitions, and their limitations.

Viewers will witness the actual discovery of the molecular mechanism of AMPK as well as the transformative effect on the young scientist who makes the discovery. *Naturally Obsessed* captures the excitement, the suspense, and the ultimate triumph of this journey.

1002072

## CREDITS

*Directors and Producers:* Richard Rifkind & Carole Rifkind

*Photo Credit:* Liza Politi



PBS®

INTERNATIONAL