Preparing for A Research Career

Margaret Rosenfeld, MD, MPH
Professor of Pediatrics, UWSOM
Division of Pulmonary Medicine, Seattle Children’s Hospital
Choices

• Fellowship is finally your chance to pursue what really interests you
• Have passion for what you work on
• Don’t take an “elective” approach to your fellowship
Find Direction Early and Stay On Course

• Consider
  – Length of fellowship (2, 3, >3 years)?
  – How much dedicated research time?
  – Are you planning on course work?
  – Where are you headed?
    • Physician-Scientist
    • Clinician-Educator
How Will You Divide Your Time?

• Patient care
• Research
• Course work
• Teaching
• Seminars and conferences
• Administration/leadership
Finding a Research Idea

• Draw your inspiration from the bedside or from life
• Do something important. Is the problem:
  – Frequent?
  – Severe?
  – Preventable or treatable?
• Do something that is feasible given time and resources
• Undertake a project that can lead to subsequent studies
How to Select Projects

• Based on goals
  – Acquire skills in research design, methods
  – Develop your agenda
  – Work with particular people
  – Feasible
Develop a Mission Statement

• Concise statement of what you intend to contribute

• Provides you with
  – Identity / Niche
  – Guiding framework for planning
  – Rationale for saying YES or NO
Mission Statement

I aim to improve our understanding and outcomes of early cystic fibrosis lung disease through epidemiologic studies, outcome measure development, and clinical trials.
Have Objectives at 3 Time Points

• ~ 5 years: Big goal
  – To conduct a clinical trial of a respiratory treatment in young children with CF
• ~ 3 years: Worthy in & of itself
  – To conduct cross sectional and longitudinal analyses using existing data
• First Steps
  – To learn epidemiology & biostatistical analysis
Mentors are Key

- Mentors provide methodologic expertise, guidance, moral support, connections
- They are critical to success in academia
- They must be invested in your career
- You can (and should) have more than one
Choosing Your Career Path

• Important to consider early in fellowship so your training matches your long-term goals

• What will be your primary focus?
  – Patient care
  – Research

• Academics?

• Private practice?

• Other?
Goal Setting

• Base on your intended career path
• Be intentional
• Be realistic
• Use your mentors (including peer mentors)
• Set medium and long-term goals; don’t live off a short-term to-do list
Applying for Grants: Why?

- Ultimately, necessary step in order to conduct independent research
- Useful skill to develop early
- Gives maximum flexibility in employment
- Successful funding = Academic happiness
Applying for Grants: How

- Start way ahead of the deadline
- Get copies of previously successful applications
- Share early ideas with mentors or collaborators
- Anticipate many revisions
Applying for Grants: Sources

• Foundations
• Pharmaceutical companies
• Academic Societies (APA, SPR)
• NIH (K- awards)
• Local hospitals, medical schools
Work Life Balance
Remember to Love What You Do... At Work
And Outside of Work
Questions?