

## Early career investigator—August issue

Simone S. Schüller<sup>1</sup>



**Figure 1.** Early Career Investigator Simone Schüller, MD.

I grew up in Vienna, Austria, where I received my MD degree from the Medical University of Vienna in 2006 (Figure 1). During my studies, I completed an ERASMUS program in Heidelberg (Germany) and an internship at Bern University Hospital (Switzerland), Pennsylvania Hospital (PA, USA), and Wollongong Hospital (NSW, AUS), which greatly broadened my experiences. After graduation, maternity leave, and laboratory research work (2007–2010), I started residency and clinical training in pediatrics at the

Medical University of Vienna, which I completed in February 2017.

My laboratory training began in 2006 at the University Hospital Bern, Switzerland together with Associate Professor Dr M. Mohaupt, a specialist in pregnancy-induced hypertension. Here, I utilized *in vitro* methodologies to investigate hormonal regulation of placental growth. Fascinated by the processes occurring during pregnancy and equipped with *in vitro* skills, I continued my research in the Department of Pediatrics, Medical University of Vienna. Supported and encouraged by a great team of specialists in the areas of neonatology (Drs A. Berger and L. Gortner); immunology (Dr E. Förster-Waldl); and pathophysiology and flow cytometry (Dr A. Spittler), I characterized preterm stem and immune cells in studies published between 2013 and 2017.

More recently, I was awarded a Max Kade fellowship to conduct research in the laboratory of Dr Ofer Levy, director of the Precision Vaccines Program at Boston Children's Hospital (USA). Here I will characterize neonatal innate immune pathways to inform development of vaccines and anti-infectives in the very young.

My determination and the support of my family and mentors have enabled me to successfully meet the challenge of becoming a physician scientist. I believe that both areas of work are mutually beneficial, and the clinically driven nature of my scientific research will enable me and others to improve neonatal care. My curiosity, an open mind, and the ability to learn from each mentor and collaborator, have enabled me to continue on my journey in translational medicine. I am grateful to my family, friends, colleagues, and funders who have made this work possible.

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