



COMMENT

Early career investigator highlight biocommentary

Lisa R. Sun ^{1,2}*Pediatric Research* (2021) 89:718; <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41390-020-01322-4>

After growing up in New Jersey, I studied Cognitive Science at Yale University. I subsequently completed medical school at Johns Hopkins, where I stayed for Pediatrics and Neurology residencies and Stroke fellowship. I joined the faculty at Johns Hopkins as an Assistant Professor in the divisions of Pediatric Neurology and Stroke in 2017.

My love for Child Neurology is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, the development of the brain and the mind is fascinating. From early on, my goal has been to understand the developing brain both in health and disease. Practically, I love spending my time working with children. I can imagine no more meaningful job than taking care of sick children and their families at their most desperate hour.

While many formative research experiences and dedicated mentors have played critical roles in fostering my research interest

and skills, my true inspiration is my patients, and two in particular. The first, a child who suffered strokes during chemotherapy for leukemia,¹ motivated my work in studying cerebrovascular dysfunction related to cancer and its treatments. Her lifelong disability is a harrowing inspiration for my research preventing stroke in high-risk populations. The second patient was another young girl with moyamoya disease, a severe cerebral arteriopathy, who suffered numerous strokes as a result, ultimately leading to her death at 4 years of age.² This devastating loss fueled my drive to improve care for children with stroke.

As a pediatric stroke neurologist, I am eager to develop clinical pathways that prevent and mitigate the impact of childhood stroke. Developing transcranial Doppler (TCD) as a biomarker for stroke risk in high-risk pediatric populations is an attractive approach because it is a safe, painless, cost-effective, bedside technique that is already standard of care for monitoring stroke risk in children with sickle cell disease. I am excited to continue investigating the use of TCD in other high-risk pediatric populations, including children with cancer and children with or at risk for cerebral arteriopathies.

My advice to new investigators is to find mentors who care about your research, but, more importantly, who care about your professional growth and personal well-being. It is ok to pivot when a line of research is no longer moving in a productive trajectory or is no longer fulfilling you. Finally, build partnerships with patients and family stakeholders. They will remind you *why* you do this work and keep your flame of inspiration burning bright.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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