


COMMENT



Early Career Investigator Spotlight: Matthew W. Harer

Matthew W. Harer ^{1,2}✉

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I was born and raised in Appleton, WI and moved to Madison, WI where I completed undergraduate studies, medical school, and pediatric residency at the University of Wisconsin. During residency I came to a crossroads—I loved working in the ICU, but I had long dreamt of becoming a sports medicine physician. A great mentor of mine posed a question that changed the trajectory of my career: “On a Friday night at 8 pm, would you rather be in the NICU taking care of a critically ill neonate or standing on the side of a football field during a high school game?” From this point, I clearly knew that I was destined to be a neonatologist and I began a NICU fellowship at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, VA.

In fellowship, I was looking for an experience that would allow me to explore different types of research. I was fortunate to work on multiple occasions with a pediatric nephrologist, Dr. Jennifer Charlton, who exuded energy and passion for neonatal kidneys and soon became my mentor. I briefly explored basic science research before focusing on clinical–translational research

examining how caffeine affects rates of acute kidney injury (AKI) and subsequently developed a study to determine how AKI impacts the renal function of children at the age of 5 years. These projects ignited a fire and passion in me to improve the kidney outcomes of neonates while in the NICU and during their childhood years.

After returning to the University of Wisconsin as an assistant professor in neonatology, I have been fortunate to continue neonatal kidney research. My research is a combination of local clinical translational trials as well as larger research studies with the Neonatal Kidney Collaborative (NKC). The NKC has provided me with invaluable experience as it relates to clinical study design as well as access to and support from senior mentorship in the neonatal kidney field.

One of the most rewarding aspects of my current research is the ability to mentor early career students and physicians. My advice for young investigators is to take early advantage of programs and opportunities to mentor trainees. For me, the curiosity and questions proposed by trainees have led to interesting projects that I would not have otherwise taken on. I look forward to mentoring many more trainees who are also interested in improving the kidney health of babies and am thankful for the mentorship I have received to reach this point in my career.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares no competing interests.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to M.W.H.

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¹University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, Madison, WI, USA. ²Department of Pediatrics, Division of Neonatology, Madison, WI, USA. ✉email: mwharer@wisc.edu

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