

Early career investigator highlight—June

Livio Provenzi¹



I was born in Milan (Italy), the only son of Anna and Ermes. I obtained the Master of Science in Developmental and Clinical Psychology (2008) and the PhD in Psychology (2016) at the Catholic University in Milan (Italy). I am currently a full-time researcher at the 0-3 Center for the at-Risk Infant of the Scientific Institute IRCCS Eugenio Medea in Bosisio Parini (LC, Italy). My main research study, the Preterm Behavioral Epigenetics (PBE) project (1), is a longitudinal research on the short- and long-term epigenetic and behavioral effects of painful and invasive procedures during the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) stay in very preterm (VPT) infants.

Many special people contributed to my career choices. During my academic education, Gherardo Amadei encouraged me to pursue a research career that sought to integrate an academic interest in the study of mother–infant dyad as a dynamic system, with my curiosity for the hidden biomarkers of developmental trajectories and clinical interest in at-risk pediatric populations. At the IRCCS Eugenio Medea, I met Renato Borgatti and Rosario Montirosso who had already started a fruitful research strand on mother–infant interaction in healthy and at-risk pediatric populations (2,3), and a longitudinal study on developmental care quality among more than 20 NICUs in Italy (i.e., the NEO-ACQUA study (4)). They are my current mentors and I could not imagine a better human and resourceful environment to grow in my early

research career. I also had the honor to collaborate with Ed Tronick on different projects (5), mastering my knowledge of the NICU Network Neurobehavioral Scale and the use of the Still-Face paradigm. A great part of the merit for the present award goes to him too. His esteem for my work is another precious drive to never settle. Finally, thanks to the PBE project, in 2015 I was supported by the Fondazione Bando del Monte di Lombardia for a visiting scholarship at the University of British Columbia (Vancouver), under the supervision of Tim Oberlander and Ruth Grunau. This was a wonderful learning and rewarding experience.

I am thankful to the national and international colleagues with whom I collaborate, especially to the colleagues at the 0-3 Center. My advice to young researchers is: that believe in your curiosity, seek help from senior mentors, develop pragmatic research questions out of your curiosity and passion, invest in human networks, and always look forward to explore the unknown.

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