



COMMENT

Early career investigator biocommentary—pediatric research

Stephanie Lovinsky-Desir¹*Pediatric Research* (2019) 85:6; <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41390-018-0212-8>

My parents immigrated from Haiti to the United States a few years before I was born in Mount Vernon, NY. Neither of them had graduated from college. But they both deeply valued education and raised me to become the 1st physician in our family. I completed my undergraduate studies at LaSalle University in Philadelphia, PA, and went on to Medical School at New York Medical College in Valhalla, NY.

I knew at the age of 5, as a young child with asthma, that I wanted to become a Pediatrician. I was inspired to train in the Social Pediatrics program at the Children's Hospital at Montefiore in the Bronx, NY, because of the emphasis on training about social, environmental, and public policy factors that influence childhood disease. In my first year of residency I participated in a walking tour of the South Bronx, the neighborhood of the children that I served in clinic. On that tour I learned that despite the city's efforts to introduce opportunities for outdoor play and recreation, the problem of air pollution exposure was very real in that community. Due to the abundance of waste transfer stations within that small neighborhood, hundreds of diesel trucks passed through on a daily basis. Furthermore, the South Bronx has over 3 times the asthma death rate compared to other neighborhoods in NY state. This Environmental Justice dilemma of high pollution burden coupled with high asthma burden inspired me to pursue a career in Pediatric Pulmonology and I went on to complete my fellowship training at New York Presbyterian—Columbia.

Currently, I am Assistant Professor of Pediatrics in the Pulmonary Division at Columbia University Irving Medical Center. I have had incredible mentors throughout my early career including Rachel Miller, Meyer Kattan, Beverley Sheares, and Matthew Perzanowski. My advice to young investigators is to continue to build a mentoring team with both senior and peer mentors that can offer new insights, support, and opportunities

for growth. I have been fortunate to receive research funding through my institution, the NIH, the Amos Medical Faculty Development Program and other foundations. These opportunities have allowed me to continue my mission to strengthen the body evidence regarding environmental exposures and childhood asthma in urban communities. My hope is that my work will inform the advice we give to patients and guide public policy so that we can keep all children healthy.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

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