



COMMENT

Global Pediatric Research Investigator: Modupe Coker

Modupe Coker^{1,2,3}*Pediatric Research* (2021) 89:1061; <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41390-020-01241-4>

I grew up in Warri, Nigeria and received my Bachelors in Dental Surgery (BDS) Degree, equivalent to the DDS/DMD in the US, at the University of Ibadan (UI), Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Thereafter, I pursued and completed a Master's in Public Health (with a concentration in Epidemiology and Biostatistics) from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and a PhD in Epidemiology from the University of Maryland, Baltimore, USA. I became an Assistant Professor of Epidemiology at Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth, New Hampshire in 2016, and now I am at Rutgers School of Dental Medicine, Newark, New Jersey as a tenure-track Assistant Professor in Oral Biology.



Since my childhood, I have been fascinated with the world of data sciences particularly understanding complex patterns of disease in pediatric populations with the hope of informing effective public health measures for prevention and sustained treatment. My interest in studying children and adolescents began while studying dentistry, where I was involved in studying the epidemiology of oral manifestations of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection in young children. This interest has evolved over the years and was the foundation of my interest in infectious disease epidemiology, pediatric and neonatal microbiology, and immunology. I am particularly interested in how early-life

exposures (like immune status, nutrition, and antibiotics) drive development of the gut, oral, and dental microbiomes. My currently funded research is focused on studying the impact of perinatal HIV infection or exposure on the risk of early childhood caries and the developing oral microbiomes in Nigerian children (co-PI-Dr Richards). I also serve as an investigator with New Hampshire Birth Cohort under the NIH-funded Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes (ECHO) program (PI-Karagas), and the Cystic Fibrosis Microbiome Cohort (PI-Madan) where we are focused on understanding the impact of early-life exposures on the developing gut and oral microbiome.

Several people have played key roles in encouraging and supporting me over the years. Drs. Blattner, Charurat, Sorkin, Karagas, Madan, and Hoen are among the key players, many of whom still mentor me today. In reference to the recently published *Pediatric Research* narrative review focused on the COVID-19-related ripple effects in children living in sub-Saharan Africa, Dr. Nadia Sam-Agudu and Prof. Morenike Ukpong have displayed exemplary leadership and excellence, and I am grateful for the opportunity to author this review with them and other notable experts in the field.

I have learnt the value of building and preserving lasting personal and professional relationships. It takes a village to implement a successful research program, be it global or local. I encourage young researchers to be intentional about forming a resilient circle of collaborations.

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