

COMMENT



Early Career Investigator Spotlight: Wesley M. Jackson

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Pediatric Research (2022) 91:1311; <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41390-022-01996-y>



I grew up in North Texas and attended medical school at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. Following pediatrics residency at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, I completed fellowship training in neonatology at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill. In 2018, I joined the faculty at UNC as an Assistant Professor in the Division of Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine.

During my Neonatal Intensive Care Unit rotations in medical school and residency, I was drawn to the field of neonatology for the opportunities to attend high-risk deliveries, perform procedures, understand the complex physiology of newborns, and provide multidisciplinary care to a vulnerable population of critically ill infants and their families. As a physician scientist, I find it exciting and challenging to work in a relatively new field of medicine, which presents frequent opportunities to develop evidence that will guide clinical decision making.

Shortly after joining UNC for fellowship, I began working with my primary mentors, Matthew Laughon and Mike O'Shea, on

clinical research focusing on the epidemiology of bronchopulmonary dysplasia in extremely preterm infants.^{1,2} While pursuing a Masters of Public Health degree during fellowship, I developed an interest in applying principles of population health and data analysis to address clinical knowledge gaps and improve outcomes in critically ill infants. Since joining faculty at UNC, I have expanded my research interests to include clinical trials operations, pharmacokinetic modeling, and epigenetic analyses. My career goal is to combine these interests to improve the outcomes of infants through drug development for diseases with limited available therapies, such as bronchopulmonary dysplasia and hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy.

My advice to those interested in research is to identify engaged mentors early in your career and find a supportive environment that provides the time and resources to develop skills that complement your clinical training.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares no competing interests.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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Received: 19 January 2022 Accepted: 26 January 2022

Published online: 12 February 2022