

COMMENT



ECI Biocommentary: Monica Hsiung Wojcik

Monica Hsiung Wojcik ¹

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Pediatric Research (2023) 93:9; <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41390-022-02354-8>

I grew up in Brookline, Massachusetts, only about a mile or so from Harvard Medical School (HMS), where I obtained my medical degree—however, growing up in a non-medical household, I had no idea that it was just around the corner. It has been a blessing to have so much family support throughout my career, as I've remained in the area for residency at the Boston Combined Residency Program (Boston Children's Hospital/Boston Medical Center) in addition to my combined fellowship training in neonatology and genetics through the Harvard Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine fellowship and the HMS Genetics Training Program. Although it was a longer road to my first (and current) faculty position, as an attending physician in both neonatology and genetics at Boston Children's Hospital, I can't imagine doing the work I do now without dedicated clinical training in both areas.



It certainly was not always clear to me that I would go to medical school, much less end up in this rather niche field.

My college mentor, John McPhee, is a creative non-fiction writer who always encouraged me to pursue a career where I could continue to learn and engage in human stories and journeys. In his class, I also learned that the most successful people also have a pile of rejection letters on their desk—so why not start now? There were times in medical school where I wasn't sure of the path ahead, but as soon as I started my first clinical rotation in pediatrics, it just felt right. I met several children with rare genetic conditions and couldn't stop thinking about them and their families. That led me to pediatrics residency, where I also fell in love with newborn medicine. I couldn't decide between the two specialties, so I chose both.

My career and research mentors Dr. Pankaj Agrawal and Dr. Ingrid Holm have been instrumental in guiding my path as established experts in newborn genomic medicine. I even directly followed in Dr. Holm's footsteps to the Harvard-wide Pediatric Health Services Research fellowship and completed my Master of Public Health degree this year. I also can't stress enough the value of my peer mentors, particularly Dr. Yarden Fraiman, my co-author on this study, with his invaluable expertise and insight related to healthcare disparities and inequities, and Dr. Anne O'Donnell-Luria, a colleague in genetics and an inspiring rare disease researcher who helped me to see myself as a physician-scientist when I was an overwhelmed fellow and new mom. My current work in clinical effectiveness research related to genomic medicine perfectly combines my academic and clinical passions towards what matters most to me in the end: improving care for our patients and their families. This project in particular really embodies that idea.

My advice for anyone at an early stage in their career would be to keep an open mind, follow what matters most to you both at home and at work, and surround yourself with colleagues and mentors who you genuinely enjoy being with so that you can continue to enrich each other. And go put yourself out there for those rejection letters!

¹Divisions of Newborn Medicine and Genetics and Genomics, Department of Pediatrics, Boston Children's Hospital and Harvard Medical School, 300 Longwood Avenue, BCH 3036, Boston, MA 02115, USA. email: Monica.Wojcik@childrens.harvard.edu

Received: 21 September 2022 Accepted: 26 September 2022

Published online: 19 October 2022