DIRECTORY
OF
BIRCWH
SCHOLARS

October 2014
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Steven Abramowitch, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Bioengineering
University of Pittsburgh
sdast9@pitt.edu
Research Focus: Biomechanics, mathematical modeling, tissue engineering, urogynecology, obstetrics

The BIRCWH has allowed me to transition from my training in orthopaedics to developing an independent, multidisciplinary research focus related to women’s health. It has allowed me to network and establish collaborations in this field that are proving to be the foundation of my research.

Peer mentoring with other BIRCWH scholars has been most beneficial. Although the research interests and departmental environment of the other scholars are very different from my own, we are all feeling the same pressures and dealing with very similar dilemmas—both professional and personal. In addition to peer mentoring, our co-PI, Dr. MacNeil, is an excellent listener and gives outstanding advice on how and when to say no. Finally, the leadership committee has given me some very specific ideas on my research that I have incorporated into the submission of my recent R01 proposal.

Sharon L. Achilles, M.D., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Sciences, Division of Gynecology Specialties
University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine
achisx@upmc.edu
Research Focus: Genital tract immunity, reproductive infectious disease, HIV transmission and prevention, contraception, family planning, microbicides, dual prevention technologies

The BIRCWH scholars’ award program is ideally situated in the awkward yet critical time between completion of training and establishment of funded independent research. It has enabled me to have sufficient protected time to continue my research and work on establishing independent funding with the goal of a successful independent career as a physician scientist.

The BIRCWH mentoring plan is essential to maximize scholars becoming successful independent researchers. I have received specific mentoring on grant writing that has been particularly beneficial.
Joshua L. Allen, Ph.D.
Research Assistant Professor, Department of Environmental Medicine
University of Rochester School of Medicine
joshua_allen@urmc.rochester.edu

Research Focus: Developmental neurotoxicology, air pollution, sex-dependent toxicity, behavioral dysfunction

BIRCWH has provided me with the protected time necessary to develop my independent research career. This time has allowed me to generate several publications and the preliminary data necessary to obtain further research funding. Additionally, the program has given me the guidance, training, and funds necessary to further my independent research career.

I have a very strong and diverse team of interdisciplinary mentors that have provided me with invaluable assistance and guidance for my research program and budding research career. The independently tailored curriculum of courses and training opportunities have fostered my professional growth and furthered my capabilities as an independent research scientist.

Dawn E. Alley, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health
University of Maryland School of Medicine
dalley@epi.umaryland.edu

Research Focus: Obesity, body composition, disability, physical function, elderly, health disparities, epidemiology, public health, population health, demography, frailty, sarcopenia

The BIRCWH program has given me the protected time and mentorship necessary to pursue my own research. It has also allowed me to reorient my research toward women’s health and to develop a greater understanding of the field of women’s health research.

My mentors have broadened my awareness of issues related to obesity and women’s health and have given me incredible support related to grantsmanship.

Soham Al Snih, M.D., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Division of Rehabilitation Sciences, School of Health Professions
University of Texas Medical Branch
soalsnih@utmb.edu

Research Focus: Gender differences in the patterns of loss in muscle strength and lower body function, as well as the influence of individual and neighborhood factors on the disablement process

The BIRCWH program has allowed me protected time to develop, publish, and write grants for my research. I have been able to network with other researchers and colleagues to collaborate on their research. My mentors have supported me in the development of my own research.
Jennifer Armstrong-Wells, M.D., M.P.H.

Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Section of Child Neurology
University of Colorado and Children’s Hospital Colorado
jennifer.armstrong-wells@ucdenver.edu

Research Focus: High-risk pregnancy outcomes, newborn brain injury, biomarkers of inflammation, coagulation disorders, placenta pathology

The BIRCWH program has allowed me to effectively begin my long-term research project in pregnancy, placental pathology, and newborn brain injury. With protected research time, BIRCWH has allowed me to fully dedicate myself to the success of this extensive project. Additionally, I have been able to garner additional funding because of the infrastructure of the BIRCWH award. BIRCWH has allowed me to take my research to a new level with the recruitment of a truly interdisciplinary team of mentors and collaborators. Finally, BIRCWH has given me opportunities to participate in community engagement for women’s health research and advocacy. The triad of research, mentorship, and community engagement encompassed by the BIRCWH program has thus been instrumental to my own career as a junior investigator.

Besides my commitment to pregnancy and neonatal brain injury research, I see myself as a mentor and role model for other young women. The BIRCWH program has furthered this vision. I have been fortunate to have strong mentors throughout my research career; it is with their mentorship that I succeed. The BIRCWH program has allowed me to expand my cadre of mentors to form a truly multidisciplinary program in pregnancy and newborn brain research. I have found that surrounding myself with mentors outside of my field has enriched my education and strengthened my research, something that I will try to encourage as I become a research mentor.

Lyndsay Ammon Avalos, Ph.D., M.P.H.

Research Scientist and Epidemiologist, Division of Research
Kaiser Permanente Northern California
lyndsay.a.avalos@kp.org

Research Focus: Reproductive and perinatal epidemiology, peripartum depression, health disparities

One of the greatest benefits of the BIRCWH program is the protected time to conduct research that I am interested in. I have taken advantage of this time to increase my publication record and to develop grant ideas. Over these past two years, I have also met several other investigators within and outside my institution with similar research interests. These interactions have developed into collaborations on several grant submissions, which if funded will help support me once I have completed the BIRCWH program. As a BIRCWH Scholar, I have also been involved in the K Scholars training program at the Clinical and Translational Science Institute at the University of California, San Francisco. This program has also provided many opportunities for support on manuscript preparation and grant preparation.

I have received valuable mentoring through the BIRCWH program. My site principal investigator, Tina Raine-Bennett, has been extremely helpful in navigating and advocating for several issues related to work-life balance. In addition, I have received valuable feedback on my manuscripts, K01 submission, and other grant submissions from Tina as well as my BIRCWH mentor. Both mentors have been extremely wonderful at including me on their studies including multi-site studies.
Keith D. Baker, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine
kdbaker@vcu.edu

Research Focus: Nuclear hormone receptors, Drosophila, developmental metabolism, oxidative stress, bioenergetic transitions, estrogen-related receptor

My association with the BIRCWH program has allowed me to engage in regular interactions with experienced investigators who are outside my field of expertise. The perspectives that these individuals provide is an invaluable resource to me as a new investigator who is still trying to gain his sea legs as a productive investigator.

For me, the most beneficial aspect of the BIRCWH mentoring process has been when we have focused on grants. Whether the discussions have revolved around my work, or on that of others, I have found that these meetings have proved the most useful, and will undoubtedly leave the most long-lasting impression on my scientific approach.

Jamie N. Bakkum-Gamez, M.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Division of Gynecologic Surgery
Mayo Clinic
bakkum.jamie@mayo.edu

Research Focus: Endometrial cancer, ovarian cancer, DNA hypermethylation, early detection

The BIRCWH program has provided me with the protected time to further my research on DNA hypermethylation in genital tract specimens of women at risk for developing endometrial cancer. This study may provide women with a screening test for endometrial cancer. The BIRCWH program has also allowed me to grow my research and build the tools to sustain research funding. I am currently in the process of writing my first R21 grant application.

The BIRCWH program mentoring has provided me with guidance on study funding and the opportunity to build a network of potential collaborators.

Amy S. Baranoski, M.D., M.Sc.
Assistant Professor, Department of Internal Medicine, Section of Infectious Diseases
Boston University School of Medicine
amy.baranoski@bmc.org

Research Focus: HIV, aging, cervical dysplasia, anal dysplasia, human papillomavirus (HPV)

The BIRCWH program has been instrumental in giving me the protected time, mentoring, and connections to lay the groundwork for a successful clinical research career. Without the BIRCWH funding, I would not have had the resources to focus on a clinical research career after completing my fellowship training.
In addition to sound advice on enhancing my own research, one aspect of mentoring which has been particularly helpful is the advice I’ve received on navigating the world of academia.

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**Daheia J. Barr-Anderson, Ph.D., M.S.P.H.**
Assistant Professor, Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics
University of South Carolina
dbarrand@mailbox.sc.edu

**Research Focus:** Obesity prevention, physical activity, African American, females, community- and home-based interventions, environmental factors, healthy eating

Being a part of the BIRCWH program has provided very important protected time to develop my research agenda. I have conducted preliminary research and collected essential pilot data that will serve as the foundation for an upcoming R01 grant application.

I have had an awesome mentoring team. My interdisciplinary team of mentors has provided exceptional guidance, advice, and expertise in both scholarship and professional development, which is supporting my journey to becoming an independent researcher.

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**Emily Barrett, Ph.D.**
Assistant Professor, Obstetrics and Gynecology
University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry
emily_barrett@urmc.rochester.edu

**Research Focus:** Pregnancy, endocrine disruption, menstrual cycle, fertility, hormones, environmental exposures, phthalates, BPA, PCOS

BIRCWH has given me the protected time to focus on generating the publications and pilot data I will need to start my career as an independent investigator. It has also provided the initial funds needed to collect pilot data to use towards larger grants. Having defined a narrow area of interest in my original BIRCWH application has helped me to stay focused on a cohesive set of projects related to women’s environmental health as I have progressed in the program. Finally, the program has made me think more consciously about career development and setting timelines for myself.

I have assembled a strong team of mentors who have helped me in numerous ways on my projects. Having the structure of the BIRCWH program has been helpful in cementing these relationships and establishing regular contact. Having the program in place has also helped me to reach out to find mentors in different departments and institutions to meet my various needs.
Kelly S. Barth, D.O.
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Division of Biobehavioral Medicine
Medical University of South Carolina
stephen@musc.edu

Research Focus: Chronic pain, opioid dependence

The BIRCWH award has enabled me to work with some of the best research mentors in the country. The didactics, reviews (K-to-R club, progress meetings), and guidance provided by the Medical University of South Carolina BIRCWH program provides a new scholar with an immense amount of support and guidance for a successful foundation in research.

We had a full-day orientation, which was invaluable in learning about the immense amount of support we have during our training. I meet with my primary mentor every two weeks, which is very beneficial for mentoring, troubleshooting, and ensuring I am remaining on track. The grant writing course, K-to-R club, and hearing presentations from current and past BIRCWH scholars has been very valuable in learning the gender literature and successful grant-writing techniques. I learned through the orientation that we have access to the success center at the South Carolina Clinical and Translational Institute. They have helped me with setting up a RedCap database and in finding a statistician.

Alicia Beeghly-Fadiel, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, Division of Epidemiology
Vanderbilt University Medical Center
alicia.beeghly@vanderbilt.edu

Research Focus: Epidemiology of women’s cancers, genetic epidemiology, ovarian cancer, pharmacogenetics, cancer susceptibility and survival

I am very grateful to the BIRCWH program and the tremendous impact it has had on my career. The guidance and support that I have received from BIRCWH colleagues and mentors have helped me secure a tenure track faculty position, develop my research agenda, and successfully obtain external funding.

Participating in regular peer review of grants, manuscript submissions, and presentations has contributed to a deeper understanding of how diverse scientific fields are and how to present my research and ideas to have the broadest possible appeal.

Danielle S. W. Benoit, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Biomedical Engineering, Department of Chemical Engineering, Department of Orthopaedics, and Center for Musculoskeletal Research
University of Rochester and University of Rochester Medical Center
benoit@bme.rochester.edu

Research Focus: Biomaterials, drug delivery, bone regeneration

The BIRCWH program has given me flexibility to develop new collaborations and research directions in osteoporosis drug delivery. The mentoring I received concerning career and research development and approaches has been especially beneficial.
Jerica M. Berge, Ph.D., LMFT, CFLE
Assistant Professor, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health
University of Minnesota Medical School
mohl0009@umn.edu

Research Focus: Familial and gender influences that create risk or protective factors for childhood and adolescent obesity in the home environment

The BIRCWH program has allowed me protected time to develop my research, publish my research, write grants for my research, and take M.P.H. classes to increase my research skills. In addition, I have been able to network with other researchers and colleagues to collaborate on their research. It has also allowed me to develop myself as a woman researcher. My mentor, the support of my BIRCWH PIs, and ORWH mentors have really showed me an exemplary model to follow as a women doing research at a top research university.

Mentoring is the key to research success! Not only has my mentor gone through what I’m going through and can provide advice, networking, and opportunities to collaborate, she also shares with me her vision for her research career future, allowing me to create my own vision for my research career future. Involving me with her grants and research publications and helping me network at conferences and informally has been invaluable. My BIRCWH PIs have also provided networking opportunities and supported all my endeavors while on the BIRCWH.

Angela Rose Black, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Kinesiology and Community Health
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
arblack1@illinois.edu

Research Focus: African American women’s health disparities, African American women’s mental health and wellness, gender-critical stress-health paradigm, stress, “strength,” and health, sociohistorical context, cultural competence

As a recently appointed BIRCWH scholar, I’ve had the pleasure of coming on board during the same time as the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the Office of Research on Women’s Health. In so doing, I’ve had the tremendous opportunity to learn of the men and women who served as advocates and trailblazers for women’s health—fighting for women’s inclusion in clinical trials and priority in federal research initiatives, and acknowledging the diverse health experiences of marginalized groups of women. Becoming a BIRCWH scholar during this time has encouraged my belief that room exists for multiple and intersecting perspectives on women’s health, generally, and African American women’s health, specifically. This encouragement further supports my developing identity as a gender-critical health disparities scientist committed to unpacking the causes of health disparities among African American women.

The mentoring I receive as a BIRCWH scholar is critical to my development as a gender-critical health disparities scientist. I have access to a host of interdisciplinary scholars who offer opportunity to rigorously examine my program of research in a supportive and nurturing environment. I gain entrée to a wealth of opportunities that further support my career trajectory. And, most importantly, I have a source of accountability for success amongst peers and senior colleagues who share in my commitment to women’s health research.
Anne H. Blaes, M.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, Division of Hematology-Oncology
University of Minnesota Medical School
blaes004@umn.edu

**Research Focus: Cancer, cancer survivorship, cardiac complications from cancer therapies, integrative health in cancer**

The program has most impacted my career by providing me with a framework of mentors. It has helped me to outline my goals on paper, and to stick to them. It has also allowed me to interact on a regular basis with several junior faculty at my institution. This collegiality has provided me with a new network of collaborators, as well as allowed me the casual opportunity to bounce ideas off of others, and to hear how others are navigating through the world of academia.

One of the biggest benefits of the BIRCWH program for me has been the mentoring aspect of the program. With this aspect of the program, I have met with mentors both within my field and outside of my area of expertise. They have required me to organize myself in such a manner to outline my specific goals and dates of completion of projects as well as specify over a several-year period the meetings I will both present at and attend. Additionally, the mentorship has held me responsible for completing these goals, as well as to give me suggestions of other individuals with whom I should meet and discuss potential areas of collaboration. I have appreciated the candid input and expertise.

Sarah E. (Betsy) Bledsoe, Ph.D., M.Phil., M.S.W.
Assistant Professor, School of Social Work
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

**Research Focus: Perinatal, maternal, and infant mental health; adolescent mothers; health disparities and culturally relevant practice; interpersonal psychotherapy; evidence-based practice**

The BIRCWH has given me the support and freedom to focus on building my research skills and agenda. It has also been crucial in facilitating transdisciplinary research connections in my area of interest.

My mentors have not only supported me in the development of my own research agenda but have shown me, through example, how to lead a research team, how to navigate the academy and a research career as a woman and mother, and the importance of mentoring at all stages of my career.

Rebecca G. Block, Ph.D., M.S.W., LCSW
Assistant Professor of Medicine, Hematology and Medical Oncology
Oregon Health and Science University
blockr@ohsu.edu

**Research Focus: Psychosocial research with adolescents and young adults (AYA) with cancer, fertility and fertility preservation for AYA women, mental health and gender, instrument development**

The BIRCWH program has provided me the mentoring and research experience I need to become an independent investigator. I work in a new field with little empirical knowledge. This is an exciting and daunting position, knowing that any contribution I make is meaningful and that there are few footsteps to follow. With the BIRCWH program, I have a team of mentors and consultants, access to meetings and conferences, and the opportunity to complete important research with these resources. Our local writing group supports productivity and facilitates peer discussion.
teaching and learning. The protected time BIRCWH affords me is invaluable to complete my research and provide an example of that which I am capable. The BIRCWH program affords me the opportunity to develop my path as an investigator and my contribution to the field of adolescent and young adult oncology.

Each different aspect of mentoring has supported me as a scientist and young investigator. Mentorship to me is part concept and part content. The concept part of mentorship is about knowing you have people—people who believe in you, people who know that your work is important and people who are invested in your success and the success of your work. The content piece is about what those people provide—the knowledge they impart, the skills they teach and the lessons they facilitate. I have learned and gained so many different skills, points of reference, perspective and approaches from my team of mentors through example, storytelling, reading assignments and introductions. I meet with each of my mentors regularly about moving forward my career, research methods, the AYA oncology movement, medical education and cancer care for adolescents and young adults with cancer.

Kelly Bosak, Ph.D., APRN
Assistant Professor, School of Nursing
University of Kansas Medical Center
kbosak@kumc.edu

Research Focus: Cardiometabolic risk prediction and disease prevention, neurophysiology of health behaviors to inform intervention development and testing

The BIRCWH program has impacted my career by providing opportunities for networking with experienced researchers as well as new research collaborations. This award has allowed time to advance my knowledge and skills to achieve independent investigator status and sustainable research funding. Ultimately, as a K12 scholar, I am preparing to contribute to formulating appropriate recommendations for clinical care. I have gained experience in the health care decision making process that can ultimately shape health policy.

Regular interaction with my primary mentor provided opportunities to meet and work with key experts to advance my research career. Regular meetings with all of the BIRCWH scholars at my institution to discuss areas of interest were also beneficial.

Kristen E. Boyle, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Section of Nutrition
University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus
kristen.boyle@ucdenver.edu

Research Focus: Maternal obesity, fetal programming, epigenetics, skeletal muscle metabolism

The BIRCWH program has been instrumental in my transition to an independent research career. Not only has the program provided funds and support to allow me to complete pilot projects necessary for the advancement of my career, but the strong mentoring support also provided through the BIRCWH program has been irreplaceable.

Under the BIRCWH program, I have developed a strong mentoring team that has helped me to more successfully design and carry out my research projects, allowing me to focus my research interests and strengthen my grant writing skills. I have also gained valuable advice on the logistics of becoming an independent researcher, including hiring staff and laboratory setup, which has helped me to better navigate my transition to independence.
Directory of BIRCWH Scholars 2014

Bryan N. Brown, Ph.D.
Research Assistant Professor, Department of Bioengineering
McGowan Institute for Regenerative Medicine, University of Pittsburgh
brownb@upmc.edu

Research Focus: Pelvic organ prolapse, surgical mesh, inflammation, biomaterials

Having been trained as an engineer, the BIRCWH program has allowed me dedicated time in which to develop a focus upon unmet clinical needs in women’s health. Further, participating in the BIRCWH program has also allowed me to develop collaborations with clinical specialists in multiple areas of women’s health which have been beneficial to my understanding of the field and areas of significant need. Interactions with the BIRCWH program committee and mentoring team have been invaluable to my progress as an independent researcher.

The BIRCWH mentorship team assembled for my projects has provided great advice both on scientific and career-related topics.

Jessica Pelletier Brown, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health
University of Maryland School of Medicine
jpbrown@epi.umaryland.edu

Research Focus: Vasomotor symptoms, mood, menopause, sleep disturbance, hot flashes

The BIRCWH program has given me the opportunity to do primary data collection in my population of interest. Accessing perimenopausal women had been a challenge until I teamed up with my co-mentor, Dr. Patti Gravitt. My BIRCWH mentors have been instrumental in my early career development. My fellow scholars have also been an asset to me and my research by allowing me to share my ideas and get feedback as well as enhancing my professional network. The BIRCWH leadership on my campus, namely Drs. Pat Langenberg and Istvan Merchenthaler, always have availability in their busy schedules to meet with me to discuss my research plans, and they keep the scholars informed about valuable campus resources.

By working closely with senior researchers, I have gained much knowledge about the NIH funding mechanisms that are best suited to my research at this early stage of my career. What I most value about my mentorship experience thus far is the investment Drs. Kate Tracy and Patti Gravitt have in my success. They are supportive of my endeavors, celebrate my accomplishments, and commiserate with me when I encounter challenges.

Laura D. Brown, M.D.
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
University of Colorado School of Medicine
laura.brown@ucdenver.edu

Research Focus: Intrauterine growth restriction, neonatal growth and nutrition, skeletal muscle development

The BIRCWH program has furthered my career in many ways. It protected my time for basic science research for 3 years, which enabled me to increase my number of publications and generate key preliminary data for further NIH grant submissions. I have learned an incredible amount of scientific and career advice from my team of BIRCWH
mentors. My mentoring team has provided help with interpretation of complex physiologic data and advice about what steps to take to move my research forward. Specifically, my mentoring team helped me form a new collaboration which will take my science into new and independent directions.

Enkhmaa Byambaa, M.D., Ph.D., M.A.S.
Assistant Professor, Department of Internal Medicine, Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes, and Metabolism
University of California, Davis, School of Medicine
ebyambaa@ucdavis.edu

Research Focus: Risk factors for cardiovascular diseases, lipoproteins, inflammation, genetics, immune and endocrine dysregulations, HIV infection, ethnicity/gender impact, nonhuman primate models of human health and diseases

The BIRCWH program is enabling me to direct my research into a new course in women’s health. The BIRCWH program supports my research in the field of cardiovascular health of women living with HIV infection with a special emphasis on lipoprotein(a), a genetically regulated risk factor for cardiovascular disease. The program is allowing me to receive advanced training in infectious diseases, immunology and genetics, and biostatistical approaches, all of which are crucial in advancing my research career. Through interactions with other trainees and scholars, as well as participation in the other BIRCWH activities, I am expanding my research horizons.

The BIRCWH mentoring has been very important to me. In addition to my primary mentor, my BIRCWH mentoring team, which includes three other mentors with expertise and knowledge in the fields essential for my BIRCWH project, has been very beneficial in terms of collaborating and addressing research questions, writing manuscripts and applications for funding, and acquiring access to research resources and opportunities for academic growth. I am also supported and guided by the directors of the UC Davis BIRCWH program.

Egle Bytautiene, M.D., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, School of Medicine, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
University of Texas Medical Branch
egbytaut@utmb.edu

Research Focus: Prepregnancy obesity and/or preeclampsia and long-term maternal and fetal outcomes, role of lactation in long-term maternal cardiometabolic health, preterm birth, aging

Since joining UTMB’s BIRCWH program, I have enjoyed the benefits of protected time to work on accumulated data, write manuscripts, prepare grant applications, and attend BIRCWH and ORWH meetings at NIH. I have experienced great mentoring by my directors, gaining valuable contacts in the field of women’s research and developing interdisciplinary collaborations. The BIRCWH award has increased both departmental support and my overall standing among my peers as I am learning to become an independent scientist.

Mentoring in grant writing is especially valuable and beneficial to me. Our program directors have developed a unique approach to grant writing. We have Specific Aims meetings, where each Scholar presents their specific aims page and receives appropriate feedback from other BIRCWH Scholars. Their diverse backgrounds—from basic scientist to epidemiologist to public health expert—ensure feedback from differing viewpoints, which contributes to the success of the grant application. Structured mentoring also requires accountability from me to my directors,
mentors, and peers, which requires me to focus on the final product of my research: grant applications and manuscripts.

Kara Calkins, M.D.
Clinical Instructor, Pediatrics
University of California, Los Angeles

Research Focus: Fetal origins of adult disease, skeletal muscle, nutrient signaling

The BIRCWH has been essential to my professional progress. The award has provided me with time to mature to as young investigator so that I can apply for 5-year career development award.

Through my work, I have learned the value of mentorship and collaboration. My mentors have been invaluable to my career development. I have formed collaborations with other departments and institutions. My scholar oversight committee provides me with quantitative and qualitative feedback on a regular basis.

Liana Castel, Ph.D., M.S.P.H.
Assistant Professor, General Internal Medicine
Vanderbilt University
liana.castel@vanderbilt.edu

Research Focus: Breast cancer, health services research, patient-reported outcomes, health disparities, outcomes measurement, pain, quality of life, clinical decision making, medication adherence

BIRCWH is helping me to make the transition toward becoming an independent investigator. The regular peer and mentor interaction that is part of BIRCWH helps me to both improve my work and move it forward.

One aspect of mentoring I receive through BIRCWH that is especially beneficial to me is work in progress sessions with my BIRCWH mentors and peers. These sessions give me the opportunity to get feedback I can incorporate into scientific presentations and papers. Another aspect of mentoring I receive through BIRCWH is the opportunity to discuss the grant submission process with mentors and peers. This aspect of mentoring helps me take advantage of internal and external resources toward winning research funding. Another aspect of BIRCWH mentoring that I benefit from greatly is the opportunity to interact regularly with my mentors and peers through career/professional development activities such as book clubs, journal clubs, workshops, and special sessions.
Janet M. Catov, Ph.D., M.S.
Associate Professor, Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences, Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine
University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine
catovjm@upmc.edu

Research Focus: Later-life maternal cardiovascular disease, preterm birth, biostatistics, adverse pregnancy outcomes, perinatal epidemiology

The BIRCWH program has allowed me to fulfill my goal to become an independent, interdisciplinary investigator in women’s health with the ability to conduct original research across the life course with a special emphasis on the reproductive years through onset and progression of chronic disease. Specifically, BIRCWH has provided the opportunity to employ several strategies in my research to study the relationship between preterm birth and later-life maternal cardiovascular disease risk.

Through the BIRCWH program, I have been mentored by a team of leading, expert scholars with expertise in women’s health. In particular, I have benefited from a diverse mentoring team that included regular meetings with a university-wide steering committee. This helped sharpen my research focus as well as provided diverse input on career development.

Alice Y. Chang, M.D., M.Sc.
Assistant Professor, Division of Endocrinology, Metabolism, Diabetes, and Nutrition, Department of Internal Medicine
Mayo Clinic
chang.alice1@mayo.edu

Research Focus: Polycystic ovary syndrome, disorders of androgen excess, insulin resistance, endothelial dysfunction, cardiovascular risk

In the first 3 months of my appointment in the BIRCWH program, the additional mentorship by the directors and executive committee of the BIRCWH program has already been invaluable. In particular, advice from research mentors in other disciplines presents opportunities to think more broadly in terms of research development and improves how you communicate your ideas. This feedback is just as important as time to dedicate to projects, grant development, and manuscripts.

From the start of the program, the executive committee identified aspects of my project and career development to focus on for the first year to increase the chances for successful external grant applications. I look forward to the additional opportunities to network at national meetings with leaders in fields focusing on women’s health and sex differences.
Abhijit J. Chaudhari, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Radiology
University of California, Davis, School of Medicine
ajchaudhari@ucdavis.edu

Research Focus: Medical imaging instrumentation, imaging protocol development, medical image processing, high spatial and temporal resolution imaging, imaging during active motion, osteoarthritis, musculoskeletal disease

The BIRCWH program is providing me, a biomedical engineer trained in medical imaging physics, unique training to better understand both clinical needs and technological challenges in women’s health, and to harness and innovate appropriate technologies to address those needs. The program is allowing me to receive the necessary training in the areas of musculoskeletal disease management, clinical implementation of novel imaging, biostatistics, design of clinical trials, and epidemiological studies to refine my research questions. The program is providing me funding to pursue a critically important clinical research question in the area of hand osteoarthritis. Participation in the program is thus having a large positive impact on my career.

BIRCWH mentoring has been very rewarding for me. The program directors continue to provide me overall guidance and career mentorship. My primary mentors have been highly committed to ensure my progress in the specific research questions, in terms of promotions, academic leadership, and receiving training in my areas of weakness. The BIRCWH journal clubs, work-in-progress meetings, and other BIRCWH events continue to broaden my knowledge of a number of areas in medicine.

Luyun Chen, Ph.D.
Assistant Research Scientist, Department of Biomedical Engineering
University of Michigan
luyunc@umich.edu

Research Focus: Pelvic floor function anatomy, pelvic floor disorder, birth injury, biomechanics, imaging, modeling

The BIRCWH program is instrumental in my career development. It allows me to focus on the research and provides me the clinical immersion training in obstetrics and gynecology. The program is invaluable in establishing collaboration and developing a focused line of research in applying engineering principles and techniques to solve clinical problems, thereby improving patient care.

Both of my mentors are excellent. They are extremely supportive of my research and career goals. They provide invaluable mentoring and feedback on project development and grant writing.
Ganesh Cherala, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacy Practice, College of Pharmacy
Oregon State University and Oregon Health & Science University
cheralag@ohsu.edu

**Research Focus:** Personalized medicine, inter-individual variability, pharmacokinetics, intrauterine growth restriction and adulthood obesity, failure of oral contraception

The BIRCWH program has offered quite a valuable experience that is enriched with mentorship, peer-to-peer support, and more importantly protected time to nourish and develop research ideas. Regular meetings with my primary mentor have been very helpful in identifying strategies and avoiding common pitfalls in building a research career. Periodic meetings with the mentoring team have enabled me to tap into the interdisciplinary research experiences.

Kirstie K. Danielson, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, College of Medicine, Division of Transplant Surgery; Departmental Affiliate, School of Public Health, Division of Epidemiology and Biostatistics
University of Illinois, Chicago
kdaniel@uic.edu

**Research Focus:** Diabetes (type 1), glycemic control, insulin resistance, diabetes complications, islet transplantation, islet cells, bone/fractures, osteocalcin, sex-based differences

The BIRCWH program has been invaluable for helping me overcome a hiatus in my research career. The BIRCWH has provided me the critical protected time, mentoring, professional development, and financial support to help restart my independent research program in diabetes and women’s health at UIC. Over the last year, I have been able to begin to lay a foundation with preliminary data, collaborations, and publications.

My BIRCWH mentors have been instrumental in guiding me through the early stages of becoming an Assistant Professor, such as developing a five-year research plan, handling promotion and tenure issues, negotiating my position and salary, and networking.

M. Kristen Demoruelle, M.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, Division of Rheumatology
University of Colorado School of Medicine
kristen.demoruelle@ucdenver.edu

**Research Focus:** Rheumatoid arthritis (RA), etiology of RA development, sex differences

The BIRCWH program has allowed me to pursue a specific focus in women’s health studies in RA. My prior research focused on the development of RA in general, but with the BIRCWH program, I am able to specifically focus on understanding why RA affects women three times more often than men. In addition, the BIRCWH program has introduced me to new investigators and mentors in other fields, and the new cross-disciplinary mentorship and collaborations I have been able to set up have expanded and enhanced my research studies.
The BIRCWH mentoring offered me input and advice from experts in other fields that I may not have come across otherwise. Their unique perspectives and backgrounds have allowed my research project to move forward in novel and exciting ways. Through the BIRCWH mentoring, I have set up new collaborations that will move my career plans forward toward becoming an independent research investigator. Also, as a woman in scientific research, there are unique challenges for career advancement for which I received helpful guidance and advice from the BIRCWH mentoring program.

Elise E. DeVito, Ph.D.
Associate Research Scientist, Psychiatry Department
Yale University School of Medicine
elise.devito@yale.edu

Research Focus: Addiction, impulsivity, neuroimaging, neuropsychology, gonadal hormones, sex differences

The Yale BIRCWH program has offered a supportive training structure within which I am able to collaborate across multi-disciplinary research teams, receive mentoring and career guidance, and expand and hone my research skill set, whilst working towards an independent research career.

Meeting regularly with my mentors both one-on-one and in small group and full research team settings has enabled me to discuss my ongoing projects and career goals with my mentors, and observe their styles related to fostering team science and encouraging productive, integrated research environments.

Stacy Drury, M.D., Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Psychiatry, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Department of Pediatrics
Tulane University School of Medicine
sdrury@tulane.edu

Research Focus: Stress reactivity, allostatic load, early adversity, epigenetics and health disparities, children

The BIRCWH Program has provided support and mentorship for me to obtain an R01 looking at gender differences in infant outcomes following exposure to prenatal and maternal life course adversity.

My diverse mentoring group has provided key support in developing my laboratory management skills, navigating career development, and experimental design in relation to gender differences and health outcomes including obesity and hypertension.
Ping Du, M.D., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, Department of Public Health Sciences
Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine
ping.du@psu.edu

Research Focus: Human papillomavirus (HPV) infection, anogenital cancers, human immunodeficiency virus, health disparities

My career goal is to establish an independent research program in the area of etiology of HPV-associated cancers among women infected with HIV. I have gained the knowledge, experience, skills, and supports from the BIRCWH program: 1) The BIRCWH program has provided the wonderful opportunities and important resources for me to develop my research project in order to prepare me to become an independent investigator. 2) The mentored research project has also helped me establish collaboration with senior investigators and learn essential aspects for successful career development in academic medicine. 3) The BIRCWH program is well organized and the program directors have provided valuable assistance (advice, resources, connections, etc.) for my research development.

I have an interdisciplinary mentoring team of five well-established investigators with different scientific expertise in basic science, clinical research, and epidemiology. The scientific mentoring that I have received from my mentors advances my knowledge in my research area and stimulates my interests in translating basic science discovery into clinical and population health research. My mentors have also shared with me their personal experience and lessons learned from their career development to help me build up my career path.

Stacie B. Dusetzina, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Division of Pharmaceutical Outcomes and Policy, Eshelman School of Pharmacy, and Department of Health Policy and Management, Gillings School of Global Public Health
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
dusetzina@unc.edu

Research Focus: Pharmacoepidemiology, public health informatics, breast cancer, depression, cost and access to treatment, pharmaceutical policy

I am a pharmacoepidemiologist and health services researcher. My work has broadly focused on understanding factors that influence the use of prescription medications in the population. The BIRCWH program has provided me with an excellent opportunity to focus my work on special challenges and gender differences in the use of pharmaceutical products. This program has provided me with training opportunities, mentorship, and time to develop and refine a research agenda that will allow me to transition into an independently funded researcher.

One of the most helpful components of the mentoring program has been the opportunity to regularly present work to a small group of mentors and peers and to receive thoughtful feedback.
Terry Ellis, Ph.D., PT, NCS
Assistant Professor, Director of the Center for Neurorehabilitation, College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences: Sargent College
Boston University
tellis@bu.edu

Research Focus: Effects of exercise on slowing the rate of disability in Parkinson disease, effects of gender on exercise adherence and outcomes

The BIRCWH program has provided the supportive environment, seasoned mentors, and necessary time needed to significantly impact my research career. Through exposure to senior researchers and mentors, I have formed additional collaborations which have helped expand and advance my research agenda. I have become more aware of grant funding opportunities and more educated and strategic in pursuing funding within the National Institutes of Health. These experiences have helped to progress my research skills and hence independence toward becoming a thriving researcher with a successful line of research. I am more prepared and better equipped to contribute meaningfully to the body of knowledge within my area of study.

Critical feedback from senior mentors and researchers has been instrumental in advancing my research ideas. Statistical support and expertise has been vital to my ability to improve the scope and depth of my analyses and hence the quality of my manuscripts. Reviewing grants, manuscripts, and comments from reviewers during the monthly BIRCWH meetings with senior faculty has been particularly helpful in fostering the development of critical thinking and introspective skills. Opportunities for feedback in both individual meetings with mentors and through presentations at research seminars have been very useful in shaping my ideas and forward progress. These collective opportunities have contributed significantly to the advancement of my research career.

Richard A. Epstein, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry
Vanderbilt University Medical Center
richard.a.epstein@vanderbilt.edu

Research Focus: Maternal medication use during pregnancy

The BIRCWH program impacted my career by providing me with the mentorship and protected time necessary to expand my research agenda to include examination of maternal prescription medication use during pregnancy, with a focus on psychotropic and analgesic medications.

The mentoring I received has had two foci. My mentoring has helped me learn how to apply pharmacoepidemiologic methods to the study of maternal medication use during pregnancy. This mentoring has improved the quality of my research. I also received mentoring in faculty career development. This mentoring will help me achieve my ultimate goal to become a tenured faculty member in my department and a valued member of my medical center and university communities.
Altan Ercan, Ph.D., M.Sc.
Assistant Professor of Medicine, Division of Rheumatology, Immunology, and Allergy
Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women’s Hospital
aercan@rics.bwh.harvard.edu
Research Focus: Hormonal regulation of immunoglobulin G glycosylation and its contribution to rheumatoid arthritis

The BIRWCH program has had a critical impact on my scientific career. It has provided me guidance and support, which was crucial in my career development and led to my promotion to assistant professor. It has broadened my scientific horizon due to presentations by leading scientists about design, execution, and evaluation of sex-related research. It has also provided a very collaborative environment where I was able to establish collaborations. Due to the BIRWCH program, I am better equipped to provide leadership as a researcher.

The design of the mentoring in the BIRWCH program is fundamentally different than the mentorship in the classical sense that I have experienced in the past. The purpose of the mentoring in the BIRWCH program is solely to help the mentee establish him- or herself as an independent scientist in the area of sex studies, which marked a cornerstone in my career.

Bethany Everett, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology
University of Illinois, Chicago
everettb@uic.edu
Research Focus: Social epidemiology, sexual orientation and sexual minority women, health disparities, substance abuse, mental health

The BIRWCH program has been instrumental for shaping my career development. I have received mentorship on issues related to professionalization and NIH funding strategies. As a sociologist, gaining insights into the NIH grant application process has been particularly valuable, as this is a topic that I would not otherwise likely receive mentorship on. Moreover, as a BIRCWH scholar, I have gained exposure to a variety of research methods and topics in the field of women’s health that have informed my own future research directions and opportunities.

My interactions with the BIRCWH mentors and scholars have been the most beneficial aspect of the program for me. Receiving career advice from established scholars, coupled with insights and shared experiences with other junior scholars, has been critical for feeling supported as an emerging researcher in the field of women’s health.

Laura Fejerman, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, Division of General Internal Medicine
University of California, San Francisco
laura.fejerman@ucsf.edu
Research Focus: Breast cancer in Latinas, genetic epidemiology, admixture mapping, genetic ancestry

The BIRWCH program has given me the opportunity to launch my own research agenda and to obtain new skills through further formal training.
Mentoring by the BIRCWH leaders at UCSF as well as by my own research mentor has been incredibly beneficial regarding my career plans and my research agenda. Attending the BIRCWH seminars, which include a very broad spectrum of research topics on women’s health, has given me new ideas for research and expanded what I thought were possible avenues to explore.

Julie Fields, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Psychology
Mayo Clinic College of Medicine
fields.julie@mayo.edu

Research Focus: Caregiver burden, self-efficacy in individuals with cognitive impairment, women as caregivers

The BIRCWH program has given me the autonomy to think independently while at the same time provided me with a team experience that has allowed me to further develop and expand my own ideas. Through this, I have strengthened my interpersonal skills, realized more fully that “more heads are better than one” and that a strong project is one that draws on knowledge and skills across disciplines, and learned that I could and should ask others for help when I had questions or ran into obstacles. It has also exposed me to the technical aspects of grant and time management and, I believe, prepared me for involvement in larger and more complex projects in the future.

I have been fortunate to be able to choose team members who are well respected in their various fields, have a broad range of expertise, and who were willing to take the time out of their already full schedules to mentor me. I feel that they are truly invested in helping me succeed and are always available when I need them to be. They have also challenged me to consider other perspectives, and this has been a rewarding learning experience.

Julianne Flanagan, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Clinical Neuroscience Division
Medical University of South Carolina
hellmuth@musc.edu

Research Focus: PTSD, substance abuse disorders, oxytocin, intimate partner violence, veterans’ health

Since beginning the BIRCWH program, I have developed new collaborations within my institution and internationally, which has enhanced my scholarly productivity and introduced me to new methods of data collection and analysis. Namely, I have developed new skills related to collecting and analyzing physiological and neuroendocrine data in human subjects. I have also developed skills related to pharmacotherapy development research. My knowledge of substance use disorders among women and gender differences in substance use disorders has grown, as have my grant development and grant management skills.

Mentorship within the BIRCWH project has been tremendously helpful in facilitating my professional development. My mentor has helped me develop new and productive collaborations, has provided valuable feedback in grant development, and has helped me maximize my scholarly productivity and professional growth.
Valerie Flax, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Research Assistant Professor, Department of Nutrition, Gillings School of Global Public Health
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
flax@unc.edu

**Research Focus:** HIV, prevention of mother-to-child transmission, infant and young child feeding practices

The BIRCWH program has given me the protected time needed to launch my career as an independent researcher. I have had the opportunity to work with other researchers in global women’s health and to gain contacts in the countries where I am interested in working. This is very helpful as I move forward with writing grants and developing my own research program.

Mentoring on grant writing and statistical methods has been especially valuable to me. I have also benefitted from regular seminar sessions where scholars present their work and receive feedback from mentors and other scholars.

Lorena Garcia, M.P.H., Dr.P.H.
Assistant Professor, Department of Public Health Sciences
University of California, Davis, School of Medicine
lgarcia@ucdavis.edu

**Research Focus:** Latina women’s health, health disparities in obesity and diabetes, immigrant health, acculturation

The BIRCWH program has enabled me to pursue research in women’s health in an academic setting. I have obtained advanced training that has informed my research in obesity and diabetes in Mexican American women. Through the BIRCWH program I have had the opportunity to be mentored by leading scholars with expertise in women’s health, endocrinology, aging, diabetes, genetics, and cardiovascular disease. The time, guidance, and input that I have received have been invaluable.

Alison Gernand, Ph.D., M.P.H., RD
Assistant Professor, Department of Nutritional Sciences
Pennsylvania State University
adg14@psu.edu

**Research Focus:** Global maternal and child nutrition, pregnancy, vitamin D, fetal growth

The BIRCWH program has helped me to quickly engage in new research activities and set up an excellent mentoring team to develop my skills to become an independent investigator. It is especially beneficial to have a multidisciplinary team of mentors that I know I can contact at any time for guidance.
Chiara Ghetti, M.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Sciences, Division of Urogynecology
University of Pittsburgh
ghetcx@mail.magee.edu

Research Focus: Pelvic floor disorders, behavioral health in women, depression, anxiety

The BIRCWH program has been instrumental in providing me protected time, mentorship, and the opportunity to develop research and leadership skills as groundwork for my career as a clinical researcher. Through the program, I have had the opportunity to develop numerous collaborative interdisciplinary relationships that have been a foundation for the evolution of my ongoing research.

Mentorship through the BIRCWH program has been exceptional. The multidimensional mentorship has included one-on-one mentoring with my primary mentor or other mentors, team mentoring, peer mentoring, and mentoring from the BIRCWH advisory committee. It spans diverse topics including all aspects of research, professional development, academic development, and work-life balance.

Nupur Ghoshal, M.D., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Neurology, Section on Aging and Dementia
Washington University School of Medicine
ghoshaln@neuro.wustl.edu

Research Focus: Frontotemporal dementia (FTD), dominantly inherited dementias, biomarker development for presymptomatic dementia

My career goal is to become a clinician-scientist with expertise in clinical neurology of dementia and a research interest focused on elucidating the underlying mechanisms of neurodegenerative diseases, including non-Alzheimer’s dementias such as frontotemporal dementia. BIRCWH has and will allow me to develop my research career during a time when my clinical responsibilities will be limited. Importantly, I will establish a novel cohort and extend my training to include behavioral and biomarker data collection and analysis. These multi-modal skills will aid me in the future longitudinal characterization of a broad range of neurodegenerative disorders. The protected time afforded by the BIRCWH is critical at this point in my development as I transition from laboratory-focused projects to translational research.

Through the BIRCWH program, I have been able to develop an amazing mentor team as well as a more specialized advisory committee. Under their guidance, I am certain I will successfully transition to an independently funded clinician-scientist.
Katherine Gifford, Psy.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Neurology, Cognitive Behavioral Division
Vanderbilt University
katie.gifford@vanderbilt.edu

Research Focus: Alzheimer’s disease, mild cognitive impairment, early detection of memory disorders

The BIRCWH program has provided me with much-needed protected time to complete my independent research. With this protected time, my productivity has noticeably increased. Furthermore, the financial support has given me the opportunity to create and lead a small research team, allowing me to develop leadership skills that are critical to running an independent research laboratory. Lastly, the professional development activities have been instrumental in honing my research ideas and projects.

My research committee and the BIRCWH team both provide unique mentorship experiences with a primary focus on how to navigate the arena of academic medicine and research. Most notable is the knowledge gained about the mechanics of submitting a federal grant, including the submission process, review, and compliance after receipt of federal dollars. BIRCWH mentorship has provided tips for time management, which become increasingly useful as demands increase. On a personal level, the mentorship on maintaining a balance has been extremely useful.

John C. Gill, Ph.D.
Instructor in Medicine, Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Hypertension
Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Harvard Medical School
jcgill@partners.org

Research Focus: Developmental neuroendocrinology, central regulation of reproduction, understanding pubertal onset, menopausal transition, regulation of GnRH secretion, kisspeptin neurobiology, growth and metabolism, epigenetic regulation of central reproduction

BIRCWH has directly contributed to my focus on the developmental regulation of reproduction by supporting my research in 1) The developmental roles of sex steroids on the gender-specific organization of the brain; 2) understanding pubertal regulators of kisspeptin neurons; 3) sex-specific organization and responsiveness of GnRH neurons in vivo; and 4) the epigenetic regulation of menopause. The BIRCWH program has done this by providing access to experts in women’s health research from diverse fields. These include experts involved in public health policy, clinical medicine, and basic/translational research, which all have expanded the scope of how my particular efforts are to be directed towards the specific understanding of health disparities that impact women. From this, I have been able to establish career-building relationships, developing my professional network of associates and colleagues interconnected by the emphasis on women’s health.

Through the BIRCWH program, I have developed a mentoring team of more senior collaborators that assist in career decisions, manuscript composition, design of experimental approach and interpretation of results. I hold this team in high regard as a valuable resource. As I continue on my pathway to independence, I closely collaborate with Dr. Ursula Kaiser, my senior mentor, as I consider her level of support in my career development to be appropriate, encouraging and balanced since my promotion to faculty at Brigham and Women’s Hospital. I hope to continue my discussions with Ursula and together continue to foster new ideas and results as I develop my own fully independent research program.
Neera Goyal, M.D., M.Sc.
Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Division of Neonatology
Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center and University of Cincinnati
neera.goyal@cchmc.org

Research Focus: Preterm birth, home visiting, socially disadvantaged populations

The BIRCWH program has provided an invaluable opportunity for me as a young investigator in terms of career and research mentorship, protected time, and research support. Because of the BIRCWH program, I will be able to successfully complete the preliminary studies necessary to compete for a K23 Career Development Award. It is therefore a critical step in my path to becoming an independent investigator. Specifically, I am using the award period to build a large, regional maternal-child health dataset using home visiting data, statewide vital records, and hospital discharge records in Ohio. This will enable me to test detailed hypotheses about health services and maternal-child outcomes, allowing me to become established in this important field of research.

Under the BIRCWH program, I have assembled a truly multidisciplinary team of mentors, including senior faculty from the Divisions of Neonatology, General Pediatrics, and Clinical Psychology and Behavioral Medicine. I have been fortunate to benefit from this diverse range of skills and expertise, which lends depth and perspective to my methodological approaches and analyses. I have learned the valuable skill of running large team meetings. Equally beneficial has been the peer mentoring available through the BIRCWH program, through which I meet monthly with other K12 and KL2 recipients to provide and receive feedback on my research.

Sue C. Grady, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Associate Professor, Department of Geography, Health and Medical Geography
Michigan State University
gradys@msu.edu

Research Focus: Women’s health, maternal and child health, perinatal regionalization, maternal mortality, infant mortality, African American health, health disparities, health and medical geography, spatial epidemiology

The BIRCWH program has impacted my career by providing salary support so that I may dedicate more of my time to developing my research agenda in women’s health. It has also provided me with research support to purchase the data that I need for my research. With this dedicated time and resources, I will be able to investigate and report my research findings and submit applications for future research in a timely manner. On a broader scale, the BIRCWH program has provided more awareness of women’s health research in my department. I have also been able to attract a high-quality Ph.D. student because of our comparable interests in women’s health. My goal is to recruit more students to build a cohort of qualified individuals in women’s health for the future. At the college level, I have received recognition of my research and that has opened doors to future collaborations.

The mentoring that I have received from BIRCWH has been very beneficial in many ways. The one-on-one discussions that I have with my primary and secondary mentors have provided me with experiential knowledge that I would not have otherwise received. I also appreciate hearing about new areas in which I can strengthen my knowledge and skills to succeed. My mentors have also introduced me to researchers in my field, and these connections are proving to be very helpful. I also learn a lot at our monthly professional development and scientific development meetings. At the scientific development meetings, I learn about others’ career trajectories and the approaches that they have used to succeed. In these meetings, I am exposed to professionals from a variety of topical areas on women’s health, so I am also being exposed to potential interdisciplinary topics and collaborators for future research.
Jennifer Graves, M.D., Ph.D., M.C.R.
Assistant Professor of Neurology, Multiple Sclerosis Division
University of California, San Francisco
jennifer.graves@ucsf.edu
Research Focus: Gender effects on risk factors for multiple sclerosis and optic neuritis
BIRCWH provided me support and mentorship for pursuing critical and understudied aspect of risk in multiple sclerosis as a new faculty member.
BIRCWH also provided me personal mentorship on my projects, ideas for new collaborations, and career mentorship.

Chad A. Grotegut, M.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Duke University
chad.grotegut@duke.edu
Research Focus: The role of beta-arrestin in mediating oxytocin receptor desensitization
The BIRCWH program has been an extraordinary opportunity to further develop my research interests, providing the necessary time and support to accomplish the transition to independent investigator.
The most helpful mentoring experience that I have received has been twofold. First, weekly data meetings provide a valuable tool to review results, plan future experiments, and review potential pitfalls. Next, career guidance sessions that include grant-writing reviews have been beneficial.

Amelia (Aimee) Grover, M.D.
Assistant Professor
Virginia Commonwealth University
agrover@mcvh-vcu.edu
Research Focus: Endocrine surgery, women’s issues
Constance Guille, M.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences
Medical University of South Carolina
guille@musc.edu

Research Focus: Perinatal and postpartum mood and anxiety disorder, biological markers of depression

The BIRCWH program has helped transition my research into the area of women’s health focusing on mood and anxiety disorders in the perinatal and postpartum periods. I have been fortunate to have mentorship from a multidisciplinary team with each approaching the research topic from different angles, including psychological, biological, and social perspectives that have greatly enhanced my understanding of these disorders.

Brian Gulbransen, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Neuroscience Program and Department of Physiology
Michigan State University
gulbrans@msu.edu

Research Focus: Interactions between enteric glia and neurons in the gastrointestinal tract in health and disease

The BIRCWH program has allowed me to explore a novel research direction and has facilitated numerous new collaborations. In addition, the BIRCWH program ensures excellent faculty mentorship through these initial stages of my independent career. The research funded by the BIRCWH will enhance my competitiveness when applying for major external funding. My mentoring team is an essential resource to help me navigate the tenure and promotion system. I rely on the experience of these individuals to address anything from minor questions to potential major issues. They enhance my research program by sharing resources, providing feedback on manuscripts and grants, and recommending contacts and local resources. I am extremely grateful for their guidance and very fortunate to have them.

Sadia Haider, M.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
University of Illinois, Chicago
sadiah@uic.edu

Research Focus: Family planning, adolescent pregnancy prevention, reproductive health disparities, contraception

The BIRCWH program has provided me with the mentorship team and the time I desperately needed to become a clinician researcher. It has taught me how to build my own program of research and has given me the ability to successfully execute research projects. The mentorship that the BIRCWH program has provided is critically important for my development and success as a tenure track faculty in academic medicine. The aspects of mentorship that were especially beneficial include the team of mentors that I have that can give me advice on how to shape my research, how to apply for grants, and how to navigate our institution in terms of resources and promotion. Most importantly, my mentors have provided me with invaluable career development that
I was lacking prior to becoming a BIRCWH scholar. Without the mentorship, I would not have been able to pursue academic medicine as a clinician researcher.

**Milton Hamblin, Ph.D.**
Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacology
Tulane University School of Medicine
mhambli@tulane.edu

Research Focus: Sex differences, vascular biology, atherosclerosis, endothelial function/dysfunction

The BIRCWH program has provided me mentorship, protected time, and the opportunity to develop my independent research program. As a result of the training made possible by this NIH-sponsored program, I have incorporated an interdisciplinary approach to my research involving basic cardiovascular biology, molecular and cellular biology, and pharmacology. The career development sessions offered by this program have been very informative.

The valuable feedback I receive from my advisory committee has been instrumental to my development as an early stage investigator. The structured mentor portion of the BIRCWH program gives me the opportunity to interact closely with colleagues and world-renowned scientists. Moreover, the mentorship I have received through this K-award program to date has exposed me to successful project management, manuscript preparation, and grant writing.

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**Karen J. Hartwell, M.D.**
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry
Medical University of South Carolina
hartwelk@musc.edu

Research Focus: Gender differences in nicotine dependence, cue-elicited craving, comorbid tobacco use, psychiatric and comorbid substance use disorders, pharmacotherapeutic treatments for drug dependence

The BIRCWH program has been instrumental in the development of my research career. Without the protected time, research training, and mentoring, I would not have been able to transition from a clinical work into research. I have appreciated the opportunities to attend national meetings and develop collaborative relationships. The new friendships have been an added bonus!

My primary mentor, Dr. Kathleen Brady, has been a wonderful role model and teacher. I have been impacted by her generosity and capacity to see the potential in others. She has the unique capacity to not only see the giftedness in others but also to nurture these gifts into maturity. I hope this trait has rubbed off and I carry forth into my own research career!
Emily Harville, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Epidemiology
Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine
harville@tulane.edu

Research Focus: Reproductive epidemiology, health disparities in birth outcomes, effects of stress on health and pregnancy, epidemiologic methods

BIRCWH provided me with time to examine my research areas and develop new proposals and research strategies. My mentors have helped me by facilitating contacts with other researchers, reading grants, and advising on grantsmanship.

Jeffrey P. Henderson, M.D., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Medicine and Molecular Microbiology
Washington University School of Medicine
jhenderson@dom.wustl.edu

Research Focus: Biochemistry and pathogenesis of host-microbial interactions

BIRCWH has facilitated the interdisciplinary interactions that are a staple of my research, and the protected time has allowed me to develop new scientific approaches based on this. The BIRCWH community of scholars both locally and nationally has been a source of inspiration.

The interdisciplinary panel of scientists on my advisory committee has been invaluable. Their comments and ideas have encouraged me to explore new areas and provided needed perspective on my work. Having mentors who are outside my departmental structure also means that I am getting a broader spectrum of career advice from people whose only motive is to help me succeed.

Daphne Hernandez, Ph.D., M.S.Ed.
Assistant Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Studies
Pennsylvania State University
dch19@psu.edu

Research Focus: Food insecurity, food assistance programs and other public assistance programs, body mass index, family structure instability

The BIRCWH program has provided me the “research time” necessary to build and expand upon my research. Aside from reading and writing, I have had the opportunity to travel to different universities to speak to leaders in the field about my research and receive valuable feedback. I believe I am a stronger researcher today because of the experiences I have had with the program.
Patricia E. Hershberger, Ph.D., M.S.N., APRN
Assistant Professor, College of Nursing
Affiliate Assistant Professor, College of Medicine
University of Illinois at Chicago
Email: phersh@uic.edu

Research Focus: High-genetic-risk couples and reproductive decision-making, young women with cancer and fertility decisions, innovative internet recruitment and data collection methods

The BIRCWH program has positively impacted my career in three major areas. In particular, the mentoring, protected time, and financial support have allowed me to develop a firm foundation for launching an innovative program of research. Through the support of the BIRCWH program, I have had the ability to conduct meaningful research (i.e., explicate reproductive decision-making in advanced genetics and assisted reproduction) that has led to several publications and presentations. These included an invitation to participate in an interdisciplinary panel at the American Society for Reproductive Medicine meeting discussing patient-provider interactions and an opportunity to provide expert consultation to representatives of the Muscular Dystrophy Association on reproductive decisions concerning high-genetic-risk individuals. Perhaps most important, I have gained necessary skills surrounding grant writing and hope to continue a life-long program of research that will add substantially to the scientific knowledge in clinical and translational research surrounding advanced genetic and assisted reproduction.

The mentoring that I have received as a BIRCWH scholar has been tremendous. Not only have I received personal and tailored mentoring from my designated BIRCWH mentors (Drs. JoEllen Wilbur, Karen Kavanaugh, and Alan Schwartz) but I have also received outstanding mentoring from the BIRCWH directors. An aspect that has been particularly beneficial is a monthly scholar-mentor-director meeting. During these meetings, topics are discussed that are relevant and timely to junior researchers such as: hiring and developing research staff, effectively preparing PowerPoint presentations, and navigating the editorial review process. The BIRCWH directors and mentors have imparted a sense of caring and willingness to help scholars with their needs. Ultimately, my mentors and the directors have afforded me the opportunity to access a growing number of resources, refine my skills, and strengthen my confidence so as to successfully launch an independent research career.

Jenny Higgins, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor, Gender and Women’s Studies
University of Wisconsin
jahiggins2@wisc.edu

Research Focus: Contraception, unintended pregnancy, abortion, sexual health, social and behavioral approaches, health disparities

The BIRCWH program has been enormously helpful to me, primarily by buying me out of teaching and allowing me to focus almost entirely on research, manuscripts, and grant writing. Without the BIRCWH, I would be teaching four courses and 600 to 700 students a year; with the BIRCWH, I am only teaching one course a year. As a result, I have sought out grant writing mentorship and support that I would otherwise be unable to do.

My regular meetings with my mentoring team keep me focused and pragmatic but also inspired to do great work. My mentors are also able to put me in touch with resources at the university with which I had been unfamiliar.
Jennifer B. Hillman, M.D., M.S.
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Division of Adolescent Medicine
Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center
jennifer.hillman@cchmc.org

Research Focus: Child and adolescent obesity, association between depression and obesity among girls, neuroendocrine regulation of hunger/satiety, stress and obesity

The BIRCWH program has allowed me the time and resources to begin my career in clinical research. I have been able to hire a part-time research assistant and obtain basic supplies (e.g., psychosocial measures, statistical support/consultation, and incentives) to begin primary/pilot data collection. It also demonstrates institutional and broader-reaching support as I seek other sources of extramural funding.

Key mentoring relationships would not have occurred without the protected time and structure of the BIRCWH funding mechanism. As a clinician without the BIRCWH funding, I would be scheduled to see patients for the majority of my time, thus allowing very little time for research endeavors.

Jacqueline Hirth, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor, School of Medicine, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
University of Texas Medical Branch
jmhirth@utmb.edu

Research Focus: Cervical cancer prevention, cancer screening best practices, health disparities, contraception

The BIRCWH program has not only given me protected time to develop my research ideas and write grant proposals, but it has also allowed me to learn more about leadership and conducting research as part of an interdisciplinary research team. These experiences have made it possible for me to grow networks with researchers in several different fields at my university, and to learn new methods of conducting clinical research. These important experiences will continue to shape my research throughout my career.

I have found that being included as an integral part of my mentor’s research projects has helped me to understand more about how to conduct complicated research studies. Further, I have gained a lot of insight on how to develop an interdisciplinary study that meaningfully integrates the expertise of other researchers in the ongoing research. I also feel that the guidance that I have received regarding how to develop a grant application will allow me to successfully develop my own fundable projects.
Natasha Hochberg, M.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor, Department of Epidemiology, Boston University School of Public Health
Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, Section of Infectious Diseases, Boston University School of Medicine
nhoch@bu.edu
Research Focus: Tuberculosis, immunology, aging, parasitic diseases, travelers’ health

The BIRCWH program has provided the protected time to develop independent research. The mentoring has been instrumental in helping me design my study, find and network with collaborators, and learn about the next steps to take to succeed in academia.

Laura McGrath Holsen, Ph.D.
Instructor in Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School
Research Associate, Department of Psychiatry; Associate Psychologist, Division of Women’s Health, Department of Medicine, Brigham and Women’s Hospital
lholsen@partners.org
Research Focus: Sex differences in neural circuitry of appetite regulation and obesity, association between neural/hormonal biomarkers and genes in comorbid obesity and major depression in women

The combination of strong mentorship, and the emphasis on interdisciplinary perspectives in studying disease from a lifespan approach, taking into consideration the social context and environment, has fostered an incredibly comprehensive approach in my research on topics related to women’s health. My research has grown tremendously in depth through these components, opening my eyes to a new way of approaching my research questions. The unparalleled mentorship and career development has strengthened my grant-writing and manuscript skills, and offered me access to wonderful mentors with experience and advice for navigating promotion and developing a well-defined program of research. I am not sure where I would be without this program!

The foremost aspect of the mentors in our BIRCWH program is their expertise and willingness to share their knowledge. Our mentors are at the top of their field, and dedicate significant time to advising us (on grant-writing, career development, etc.) based on their own substantial experience. They are brilliant, enthusiastic, and encouraging, and serve as wonderful role models. They are also talented at providing guidance and constructive feedback, and take a personal interest in the mentoring relationship.

Janet K. Horton, M.D.
Associate Professor, Department of Radiation Oncology
Duke University School of Medicine
janet.horton@duke.edu
Research Focus: Breast cancer, radiation response, radiosensitization, clinical trials

Participating in the BIRCWH program has allowed me to maintain the protected time, formal instruction, and focused mentoring crucial to my successful development as a
young translational investigator. The BIRCWH small group environment functions to both support applicants and encourage accountability through goal setting, group troubleshooting, and provision of guidance relevant to early stage investigators.

The BIRCWH program provides both senior and peer mentoring through regular meetings with BIRCWH leaders and other scholars. This two-pronged approach is invaluable in increasing awareness of opportunities for young investigators, providing global guidance in career development, and allowing creative problem solving for common problems faced by young investigators.

Anne K. Hughes, Ph.D., M.S.W.
Assistant Professor, School of Social Work
Michigan State University
hughesa@msu.edu

Research Focus: Sexual health, sexual risk, aging women, provider communication

The BIRCWH has impacted me profoundly by enabling me to focus my research time and exposing me to the world of women’s health research. I have been able to gain additional training and improve my research skills. Being part of the BIRCWH community of scholars and mentors has enabled me to envision my short- and long-term goals. The support has been instrumental to my success.

I feel very fortunate to have accessible and knowledgeable mentors from several disciplines. Their support and guidance have helped me navigate the academic environment in general and academic research specifically. I have benefitted from the experience that my mentors have had in obtaining federal funding. They are generous in sharing their experiences so that my application is as strong as possible. It has been invaluable to learn from other disciplines and get the intensive grant writing support that we are given.

Holly Hull, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
University of Kansas Medical Center
hhull@kumc.edu

Research Focus: Pregnancy, influence of maternal obesity and diabetes on maternal cardiometabolic health, maternal body composition changes during pregnancy, developmental programming, neonatal growth and body composition

My research focuses on the impact of the perinatal period on short- and long-term maternal and infant health. The BIRCWH has provided me access to experts in this field and with the infrastructure support to develop my research agenda. I have been connected with other scientists and collaborators, and grants are in development due to these connections. Without BIRCWH and the protected research time, launching my research career would have been slow and difficult.

My mentoring team has been instrumental in the development of my independent research career. I am indebted to my mentors for their countless hours of commitment, from reading proposals, being a sounding board for study development or advisement on career direction. As I develop into an independent researcher, I hope I can be as tremendous of an influence and inspiration to those that work with me and pay it forward for all that has been done on my behalf for my career development.
Kathryn Elizabeth Hulse, Ph.D.
Research Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, Division of Allergy-Immunology
Northwestern University
k-hulse@northwestern.edu

Research Focus: Human immunology, B cells, antibodies, chronic airway inflammation, autoimmunity, sex-specific differences in disease

The BIRCWH program has provided me the opportunity to pursue an independent research career, and to differentiate my research from that of my mentor. This program has provided the means to travel and network with peers in my field, conduct research to provide data for publications and grant applications, and help establish my independence as an investigator.

I received specific guidance on writing competitive grant applications and advancing my independent career that was invaluable. The mentoring through the BIRCWH program also provided opportunities to improve my written and oral communication skills, and resources to help me as my career advances.

Kristen M. Hurley, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor, Pediatrics
University of Maryland School of Medicine
khurley@peds.umaryland.edu

Research Focus: Maternal mental health, maternal and child nutrition

The BIRCWH program has provided the time and opportunities needed for me to become more proficient in addressing problems related to maternal mental health and maternal and child nutrition. Specifically, the program has allowed me to obtain didactic and hands-on training in longitudinal data analysis, advance nutritional epidemiology, and mental health research; and initiate my own independent interdisciplinary research activities.

My multidisciplinary mentoring team consists of three individuals who are not only extremely knowledgeable but who also are committed to my success and selflessly share their time and expertise with me. In addition, they have helped me to network with faculty in other disciplines, departments, and institutions.

Emily Goard Jacobs, Ph.D.
Instructor, Department of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School
Associate Scientist, Department of Medicine, Division of Women’s Health, Brigham and Women’s Hospital
egijacobs@research.bwh.harvard.edu

Research Focus: Neuroscience, cognitive aging, neuroendocrinology, fetal antecedents

Historically, basic and clinical research has overlooked the importance of understanding sex differences in health and disease. Brigham and Women’s Hospital has been an important leader in challenging that trend. As a neuroscientist investigating the role of sex hormones in memory circuitry, being at Brigham and Women’s Hospital among leaders in the field of women’s health research has been incredibly rewarding. BIRCWH
Tamarra James-Todd, Ph.D., M.P.H.

Instructor in Medicine, Department of Medicine, Division of Women’s Health
Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Harvard Medical School
tjames-todd@bics.bwh.harvard.edu

Research Focus: Diabetes, obesity, endocrine-disrupting chemicals, health disparities

As a BIRCWH scholar, I have had the opportunity to interact with a variety of experts across multiple disciplines, including senior-level faculty members, associate BIRCWH scholars, and my peers in the program. These cross-disciplinary interactions have provided opportunities to develop new collaborations, explore novel research questions, and provide expert advice on career development. Furthermore, the BIRCWH program has provided a level of depth to my research by better informing the pathophysiology of my research questions and allowing me to explore novel mechanistic research questions in my research. Currently, a BIRCWH colleague and I are preparing an R21 submission that would merge together clinical and population-based research with basic science to investigate the role of chemical exposures, epigenetics, and endocrine diseases in women. These interdisciplinary collaborations are invaluable and provide an opportunity to advance science through the translation of research findings from bench to bedside.

My primary mentor, Dr. Janet Rich-Edwards, has provided excellent mentorship with the ability to help me see both the details of planning out my career, as well as the big picture of where I would like to be long-term. I also have a co-mentor, Dr. Florence Brown, an endocrinologist, who provides me access to the clinical care of women with diabetes in pregnancy. These clinical exposures have allowed me, as a population scientist, to develop new questions that will have a better clinical impact on patient care and prevention of disease. Finally, Drs. Jill Goldstein and Ursula Kaiser, who direct the BIRCWH program at Brigham and Women’s Hospital/Harvard Medical School, have provided mentorship by fostering collaborations amongst the BIRCWH scholars, as well as bringing in expert speakers on a variety of scientific and career development topics. These mentoring experiences continue to help me transition to an independent investigator.

Hyunyoung (Young) Jeong, Pharm.D., Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacy Practice, Department of Biopharmaceutical Sciences
University of Illinois, Chicago
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Research Focus: Clinical pharmacokinetics of drugs during pregnancy, altered drug metabolism during pregnancy, hormonal regulation of drug-metabolizing enzymes

The BIRCWH program has provided me with networking opportunities with other scholars and protected time for research. My mentors have offered tips for grant writing, personnel management skills, tips for successful promotion and tenure, and most of all, their friendship.
Jami Josefson, M.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Division of Endocrinology
Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine
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Research Focus: Fetal programming, neonatal body composition, nutrition in pregnancy, weight gain in pregnancy, early predictors of childhood obesity

The BIRCWH program has provided me with protected research time and funding to continue my clinical study of weight gain and nutrition in pregnancy and the impact on newborn body composition. I am fortunate to receive mentoring from experienced clinical researchers who are dedicated to my successful career development. My primary mentor has been conducting clinical research on pregnant women for more than 40 years. His expertise in the planning, execution, and writing of clinical studies is invaluable.

Colleen Glyde Julian, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, Division of Biomedical Informatics and Personalized Medicine
University of Colorado, Denver
collen.julian@ucdenver.edu

Research Focus: Epigenetic and genomic mechanisms for hypoxia-induced fetal growth restriction (IUGR), maternal adaptation to pregnancy, determinants of pregnancy outcome at high altitude, the influence of environmental epigenetic modifiers during intrauterine life for adult-onset disease

The BIRCWH program has enabled me to focus on my specific research area of interest in more depth and has provided me with the support I need to move forward both scientifically and professionally. On a regular basis, I have been able to work closely with and obtain advice from established researchers from the various disciplines that are integral to my work. This has been and will continue to be indispensable. I have been more productive in terms of moving forward with my research goals because of the connections provided by my mentors and advisors, and the other resources they have made available to me.

Especially beneficial to me are individual interactions with mentors, scientific advisors, and the program director with respect to addressing problems encountered during my research, working through these issues, and providing connections throughout the university.

Todd A. Jusko, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Departments of Public Health Sciences and Environmental Medicine
University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry
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Research Focus: Environmental epidemiology, children’s environmental health, developmental immunotoxicology

First and foremost, the BIRCWH program afforded me the opportunity to launch my academic career, moving from a postdoctoral fellow to assistant professor. Second, the BIRCWH has given me the protected time to get my
research started, which, as a new investigator, has been absolutely essential. This has allowed me to begin writing pilot grants in preparation for future grant applications.

I am fortunate enough to be at an institution where I receive mentorship in epidemiology and immunotoxicology. Though I am trained as an epidemiologist, getting “real world” advice from senior faculty on grant writing and career development has been important at the early stages of my career. Scientifically, I have benefited from having a BIRCWH co-mentor in immunotoxicology, who has helped me navigate the fields of immunology and toxicology. This includes suggestions for additional training, and collaboration on cross-disciplinary projects.

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**Beena Kamath-Rayne, M.D., M.P.H.**

Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Division of Neonatology and Pulmonary Biology  
Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center  
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**Research Focus: Neonatal outcomes, late preterm infants, fetal lung maturity, biomarker discovery**

The BIRCWH program has further demonstrated to my division that I am committed to an academic career, and allowed me protected time to obtain preliminary data and publications that will serve as the background for further grant funding in the future. It has helped me with initial resources for research nurses for study recruitment, and establishment of an amniotic fluid biorepository for biomarker discovery.

My BIRCWH mentor and I have weekly meetings to discuss career development and research progress. Her help and support has enabled me to ask for the research help that I need to be successful. I also have a scholarship oversight committee of various experts at my institution who help in my career development, and sounding out research ideas. The BIRCWH director at our institution has also helped garner positive relationships between the scholars here, and is a great sounding board to voice concerns and questions regarding career development.

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**Wendy Katzman, D.P.T.Sc., PT**

Associate Clinical Professor  
University of California, San Francisco  
wendy.katzman@ucsfmedctr.org

**Research Focus: Musculoskeletal aging, hyperkyphosis, physical function**

The BIRCWH program has given me the opportunity to receive advanced training in clinical research and ongoing support on projects, manuscripts, grants, and career development that have enabled me to redirect my clinical career into research.

The support and encouragement from experienced researchers has enabled me to persevere, and maintain confidence to pursue my passion for clinical research.
Tanika N. Kelly, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor, Department of Epidemiology
Tulane University
tkelly@tulane.edu

Research Focus: Genomic research of cardiovascular disease (CVD); gender differences in the genetic etiology of CVD; etiology and prevention of obesity, hypertension, coronary heart disease, and stroke

The BIRCWH program has had a strong, positive impact on my career. The protected research time has given me the opportunity to work as a focused and productive new investigator. Furthermore, I have been able to pursue my interests examining the role of gender in determining the effects of genes on CVD and its comorbid conditions. The multidisciplinary training has been particularly important to develop my career as both an epidemiologist and genetic researcher. The mentoring received as a BIRCWH scholar has been particularly beneficial. My mentors include both a physician and an epidemiologist with an advanced degree in human molecular genetics. Their extensive and broad range of expertise has added important clinical insights and public health perspectives to my research, perhaps making it more “big picture.” This type of understanding is integral to translating genetic findings into advanced strategies for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of CVD in women.

Megan Moriarty Kelsey, M.D., M.S.
Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Section of Pediatric Endocrinology
University of Colorado, Denver, and Children’s Hospital Colorado
megan.kelsey@childrenscolorado.org

Research Focus: Metabolic change in puberty, obesity, insulin resistance, sex differences in effects of obesity on gonadal function

The BIRCWH award has enabled me to pursue my goal to be an independent investigator studying interactions among puberty, obesity, insulin resistance, and gonadal function. I have been able to secure additional funding through the American Diabetes Association. In addition to providing protected time, the BIRCWH has provided the structure, guidance, and support through a multidisciplinary team of mentors necessary to pursue a successful career as a clinical investigator.

The structured mentorship of the BIRCWH award is a huge benefit of this grant. Without it, I would not have formed a formal mentor relationship with one of my three BIRCWH mentors, which has added strength to my research protocol due to her experience in measuring urine sex steroid metabolites. Not only have I received beneficial scientific advice from my BIRCWH mentors, but they have been advocates for my protected time and have provided career advice. The committee meetings have been critical in helping me to stay on track and reassuring that I am making appropriate progress. Finally, although not my official mentor, the PI of our BIRCWH grant has been a wonderful support and has provided extremely useful career advice.
Michelle A. Kominiarek, M.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine
University of Illinois, Chicago
mkomin1@uic.edu

Research Focus: Maternal obesity, gestational weight gain, prenatal care interventions, adipokinsins, health disparities, centering pregnancy, provider education

My career goal is to become an independent clinician-scientist who investigates one of the most serious problems in pregnancy: obesity. The BIRCWH program has had a tremendous impact on my career and has put this goal within reach. Through the protected time, I have been able to further my education and obtain valuable mentoring. The networking opportunities have allowed me to establish collaborations across several disciplines. I am hopeful that these efforts will provide me with the expertise to develop, implement, and disseminate evidence-based interventions for obese minority women and their prenatal care providers.

My mentors are from a diverse team and clearly are committed to my career development and research agenda. They have guided me along my career path and helped me overcome obstacles in my research. The other BIRCWH scholars in my program have enriched my education and contributed significantly to my research. I have also learned about the steps that are necessary to succeed in an academic environment.

Hernan D. Kopcow, Ph.D.
Instructor, Department of Medicine
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard Medical School
hkopcow@bidmc.harvard.edu

Research Focus: The role of natural killer cells in the pathogenesis of preeclampsia

The BIRCWH program is allowing me to transition to a funded independent position. BIRCWH directors are providing me with invaluable guidance in the grant application process that complements the guidance I am receiving from my mentor.

Katy B. Kozhimannil, Ph.D., M.P.A.
Assistant Professor, Division of Health Policy and Management
University of Minnesota School of Public Health
kbk@umn.edu

Research Focus: Maternal health, childbirth care, health care policy, quality of care, vulnerable populations

I conduct research to inform the development, implementation, and evaluation of health policy that impacts reproductive-age women and their families. Through the BIRCWH program, I have been able to establish interdisciplinary collaborations and bring insights from mentors and colleagues to enhance my research on maternal health services.

My BIRCWH program and mentorship team provide advocacy and support that is tremendously valuable to me. My mentors facilitate opportunities and help guide my growth and development as a researcher.
Susan A. Krum, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Orthopaedic Surgery
David Geffen School of Medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and UCLA Orthopaedic Hospital
skrum@mednet.ucla.edu

Research Focus: Estrogen, bone, osteoporosis, tissue-specific transcription

BIRCWH has allowed me to be an assistant professor focused on my research.

Vishal Lamba, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Experimental and Clinical Pharmacology
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Research Focus: Regulation of expression of drug response genes, pharmacogenomics, sex differences

The BIRCWH program has allowed me to utilize my pharmacogenetic training to develop an independent research career focused on women’s health. The multidisciplinary nature of the BIRCWH program has allowed me to network and establish collaborations with other researchers. The career development activities offered as part of BIRCWH are excellent and have allowed me to receive training that both enhances and complements my current skill set. Being a part of BIRCWH also gives me access to, and allows me to receive, invaluable advice and guidance from leading scientists and research mentors.

My mentoring team has been hugely beneficial to me both in terms of providing valuable research and career-related advice and also providing insights into aspects of grant management.

Shannon K. Laughlin-Tommaso, M.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Division of Gynecology
Mayo Clinic
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Research Focus: Uterine fibroids, cardiovascular disease, prevention

The BIRCWH program has provided protected time to launch my own investigation into the association of uterine fibroids and cardiovascular disease. The multidisciplinary approach and the focus on career development are valuable for guiding my research. I now have a path toward independent funding. Most importantly, the network of collaborators has allowed me to form a team of researchers at multiple institutions that are helping me reach my goal.

My mentors have been extremely helpful in directing me toward productive goals and keeping a reasonable timeline. They stress independence while continuing to be supportive guides.
Christine G. Lee, M.D., M.S.
Assistant Professor, Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Clinical Nutrition, Department of Medicine
Oregon Health and Science University
leechr@ohsu.edu

Research Focus: Changes in body composition with aging, insulin resistance, sarcopenia

I have been investigating the association between insulin resistance and the development of sarcopenia in the Osteoporotic Fractures in Men Study (MrOS), a cohort of older men. As a BIRCWH scholar, I have been given the opportunity to extend my studies of insulin resistance and sarcopenia to cohorts of older women, including the Study of Osteoporotic Fractures (SOF) and the Health, Aging and Body Composition Study (HABC).

I have found the peer review process in the BIRCWH program to be invaluable. Furthermore, being part of the BIRCWH program has allowed me to build important collaborations with prominent women’s health and aging researchers.

Christopher S. Lee, Ph.D., RN
Assistant Professor, School of Nursing
Oregon Health and Science University
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Research Focus: Gender differences in multidimensional heart failure symptoms

The mentorship and interdisciplinary nature of the experience have greatly enhanced my research involving gender differences in heart failure symptoms. Moreover, having a strong peer group of BIRCWH scholars from other disciplines has enhanced my scientific and grant-writing skills.

Having mentors from different disciplines who are actively engaged in different areas of practice and research has been particularly helpful.

Angela M. Leung, M.D., M.Sc.
Instructor of Medicine, Department of Medicine, Section of Endocrinology, Diabetes, and Nutrition
Boston University School of Medicine and Boston University Medical Center
angela.leung@bmc.org

Research Focus: Iodine nutrition during pregnancy and lactation, effects of environmental perchlorate and thiocyanate exposures on iodine availability, thyroid disease during pregnancy

The BIRCWH program has provided me access to an accomplished group of interdisciplinary mentors with expertise both in my field and research design. The monthly BIRCWH meetings on campus have been a wonderful chance to both present my research and listen to others’ research in a wide array of women’s health areas. The meetings have been intellectually stimulating, challenging, and helpful toward planning of my goals toward a career as an independent academic clinical investigator. It is a uniquely well-structured program that has provided me with the support I am seeking toward achieving these goals.
My two co-mentors for the BIRCWH program are Dr. Lewis Braverman and Dr. Elizabeth Hatch. Dr. Braverman has a 50+ year career in the areas of thyroid disease during pregnancy and lactation and the effects of environmental exposures on the thyroid, and his primary mentorship of my BIRCWH project has provided me strong guidance and support in carrying out this research. Dr. Hatch has extensive experience in epidemiology and research design, particularly in relation to childhood environmental exposures on long-term outcomes. From her expertise in this area, I have been able to work with her on related research hypotheses toward submission of an NIH K23 grant.

Lovie F. Lewis, Pharm.D.
Clinical Assistant Professor
Xavier University College of Pharmacy
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Research Focus: Medication adherence, health disparities, hypertension in women, adolescent health

The BIRCWH program has given me the opportunity to develop the skills I need in order to become a principle investigator. The protected time provided through the BIRCWH program has allowed me to fully dedicate my time towards building a successful research and academic portfolio. I am truly inspired by the accomplishments of the scholars in women’s research and academia. I am very grateful to have had this opportunity. I am also grateful to have worked with such a stellar group of mentors. They have given me guided support in study design, grant writing, and manuscript preparation.

Shengxu Li, M.D., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Epidemiology
Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine
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Research Focus: Cardiovascular risk factors, obesity, type 2 diabetes, genetic epidemiology

I just started the BIRCWH program recently. However, I have already received critical guidance and advice from my mentors. The BIRCWH program will provide me a wonderful opportunity to pursue my research interest in women’s cardiovascular health; interdisciplinary training in basic, clinical, and population research; excellent mentorships from a mentor team of diverse backgrounds; access to a rich database from the Health and Retirement Study; and protected research time to gain research independence. With help and guidance from my mentor team, I increasingly appreciate the importance of planning for my future career development.

Sara Lindberg, Ph.D., M.S.
Assistant Scientist, Center for Women’s Health and Health Disparities Research, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health
smlindberg@wisc.edu
Research Focus: Maternal and child health, health disparities, obesity, gestational weight gain
The BIRCWH program provides valuable opportunities to connect with an interdisciplinary network of scholars, locally and nationally, all committed to improving women’s health and reducing health disparities. Having protected time for research has enabled me to focus on developing an independent research program.

My work has benefited from a mentoring team of experienced academic researchers. These mentors have generously provided expertise to guide manuscript development and grant writing, as well as advice to navigate career strategy as a behavioral scientist in a clinical department. My mentors have exceeded my expectations in their willingness to share their time and experiences in order to guide my career development, support my research, and take my skills to the next level.

Elizabeth J. Lyons, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor, Institute for Translational Sciences, School of Medicine
University of Texas Medical Branch
ellyons@utmb.edu

Research Focus: Technology-based physical activity interventions, cancer control and prevention, health behavior change theory, eHealth and mHealth

The BIRCWH program has been instrumental in allowing me the time to develop my research and career development goals. I have been able to concentrate on conducting pilot studies, writing manuscripts, and developing grant applications. BIRCWH provides a stepping stone towards independence during which junior faculty can experiment and really be creative. Now that I have several years of preliminary data and mentored research experience completed, I feel that I am in a better position to seek independent funding than I would have been otherwise. My proposal review scores have improved since becoming a BIRCWH scholar, and I have recently received extramural funding from the American Heart Association.

The BIRCWH program at the University of Texas Medical Branch concentrates on very practical aspects of an independent research career, which has been hugely helpful for me. I have received extensive training and support for developing and improving grants during the early stages (group meetings to discuss Specific Aims pages, writing workshops) and during the later stages (internal and external reviewers, group meetings to discuss resubmission edits, editorial assistance). I received the benefits of advice and close reading of my work by health services, behavioral science, and clinical researchers. These mentors also provide invaluable advice on concrete aspects of my research, like the optimal number of participants for a feasibility trial or the best type of control group to use. BIRCWH mentoring provides me with knowledge and skills that I would not have obtained from books, classes, or workshops. It is a unique and really powerful mentoring program.

Shruthi Mahalingaiah, M.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
Boston University
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Research Focus: Human reproduction, endocrine disruptors, infertility, ovulatory dysfunction, obesity, environmental influences on gynecologic diseases including endometriosis and uterine leiomyomata

The BIRCWH program has made it possible for me to gain further training in research methods and grant writing and to expand my abilities in study design. Without this funding support, I would not have been able to dedicate this much time to improving my research skills with this level of academic rigor.
BIRCWH research meetings with review of data, manuscripts, and especially grant drafts have helped me further hone my skills.

Wendy Marder, M.D., M.S.
Clinical Assistant Professor, Department of Internal Medicine, Division of Rheumatology, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
University of Michigan Health System
wmarder@umich.edu
Research Focus: Women’s health and autoimmunity, long-term outcomes of children born to mothers with autoimmune diseases

The BIRCWH program has allowed me to pursue a career in clinical research related to women’s health among patients with rheumatic autoimmune diseases such as systemic lupus erythematosus and antiphospholipid antibody syndrome, among whom the incidence of pregnancy complications is high, and whose children are at increased risk for learning disabilities. My research on these topics has been facilitated by a diverse group of collaborators and mentors from fields including obstetrics, gynecology, reproductive endocrinology, pathology, epidemiology, and psychiatry. My BIRCWH mentors have been outstanding, helping to guide me toward independent funding and a sustainable research career. Particularly with clinical research, in which it often takes several years to generate pilot or preliminary data, having dependable support such as the BIRCWH program is absolutely necessary.

My mentoring committee for my BIRCWH award comprised of a basic scientist, an epidemiologist, a lupus expert, the former director of the Michigan Institute for Clinical and Health Research, Dr. Dan Clauw, and University of Michigan BIRCWH co-director Dr. Timothy Johnson. Through regular meetings with members of this committee, I was able to set short- and long-term goals to accomplish different aspects of my research plan. I greatly benefitted from their recommendations about funding sources, choosing potential collaborators, and general advice relating to “grantsmanship.” Our monthly BIRCWH meetings also provided a platform for peer-mentoring among BIRCWH and WHRH (Women’s Reproductive Health Research) scholars, as we were tasked with reviewing our colleagues’ grant proposals or manuscripts each month and providing feedback. I have applied for the University of Michigan’s “R01 Bootcamp” offered through the University of Michigan’s Office of Research, and I am hopeful that I will be able to participate in this program in the coming year.

Julie A. Markham, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Maryland Psychiatric Research Center
University of Maryland, Baltimore, School of Medicine
jmarkham@mprc.umaryland.edu
Research Focus: Gonadal steroids and adolescent brain development, sex differences in mental illness, prenatal stress and psychiatric illness

BIRCWH has jump-started my transition to independence. When I applied to the scholar program, I had designed a program of research that was independent from either of my previous postdoctoral mentors’, but I did not have funding to support me as I pursued this line of study. BIRCWH has not only provided support to me during this critical junction in my career; it also provided the impetus to my department to take a chance on me and offer me a faculty position. I anticipate that the prestige associated with obtaining this award will significantly increase my competitiveness in obtaining independent funding for my work.
Naturally, I enjoy the discussions I have with my mentors about the science I’m conducting; they all give wonderful feedback from very different perspectives and the conversations are always lively. I think I benefit equally, though—if not more—from the counsel they have offered me on securing independence, securing funding, succeeding in my academic environment, and in developing a reputation that extends beyond my institution. As a junior faculty member, I find this kind of advice invaluable.

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**Amy D. Marshall, Ph.D.**  
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology  
Pennsylvania State University  
amymarshall@psu.edu  

**Research Focus:** Intimate partner violence, posttraumatic stress disorder, neuroendocrinology, social cognition  

The BIRCWH program has provided me with the time necessary to learn a new area of research and incorporate it into my existing program of research. In turn, my theoretical perspective has broadened and my research has become more translational and interdisciplinary. I have found the career mentoring to be most beneficial. In particular, discussion of which projects to focus on first, how to establish collaborative relationships, and how to manage competing demands has helped me to become more focused and productive during my tenure in the BIRCWH program.

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**Michelle M. Martel, Ph.D.**  
Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Clinical Psychology Program  
University of Kentucky  
michelle.martel@uky.edu  

**Research Focus:** Clinical psychology, sex differences, developmental psychopathology  

The BIRCWH program has been invaluable in furthering my career. It has provided me with extra time to work on publications, prepare and obtain feedback on grants, and establish broader professional networks both within and outside my university. Further, the BIRCWH program has provided me with the flexibility and extra funds to take risks with my research program that I would not otherwise have had the time or support to attempt.

BIRCWH mentoring has been critical in providing valuable role models of individuals doing critical work on women’s health and sex differences in health-related outcomes. These individuals have inspired me by their ability to be highly successful in a demanding research career, while also balancing work and family and being available to mentor younger faculty members. I find my mentorship team to be critical in providing support and encouragement for all my professional endeavors, especially in the perseverance required for grant submissions. They have further helped me to forge needed connections within and outside the university.
Clifford Mason, Ph.D.
Research Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
University of Kansas Medical Center
cmason@kumc.edu

Research Focus: Placenta, drug transport, myometrium, preterm labor, pregnancy disease

The BIRCWH program has allowed me to engage in a research career focused in maternal-fetal pharmacology. The mentorship and training made possible by the BIRCWH program have fostered my development as a researcher in this neglected area and have imparted an intimate understanding of the multidisciplinary nature of the field. As a BIRCWH scholar, I have the opportunity to regularly interact with other scholars and faculty from different departments as well as attend annual scientific meetings. These national meetings provide a unique opportunity to disseminate my research and are also vital for establishing and maintaining collaborations. Based on the knowledge acquired from the BIRCWH program, I intend to focus my laboratory around the development and design of new treatment options and delivery mechanisms to overcome the maternal-fetal barriers established in the placenta.

Aspects of mentoring during the BIRCWH program that have been beneficial include advanced training, the evaluation of progress, and career guidance. Activities used to evaluate my progress in research and career development have included submissions of grants and manuscripts. The training in grant writing has been especially beneficial for my transition to independence.

Susan Marshall Mason, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor, Division of Epidemiology and Community Health
University of Minnesota School of Public Health
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Research Focus: Psychosocial stress, psychological trauma, adverse childhood experiences, maternal obesity, gestational weight gain, perinatal health, disparities

The BIRCWH program has allowed me to focus my time toward building my research agenda and has helped me to focus my energy on my long-term career goals. The mentorship program and connection with other BIRCWH scholars is also a great source of social support and potential collaboration.

It has been very helpful to discuss the feasibility and significance of research ideas with more experienced academics and to receive guidance from them on strategies for building toward long-term career goals.

Jennifer S. McCall-Hosenfeld, M.D., M.Sc., FACP
Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine and Public Health Sciences, Division of General Internal Medicine
Pennsylvania State University School of Medicine
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Research Focus: Intimate partner violence, rural women’s health, women’s primary and preventive health care, women’s mental health in primary care

As a junior faculty member and clinician, the BIRCWH program has afforded me the protected time and a formal mentorship structure to develop into an independent investigator. During my BIRCWH training, I have transitioned
from secondary analysis of databases to primary data collection, and gained skills with qualitative data collection and analysis. I would not have had the courage to pursue this transition without the guidance of senior faculty members who are generous with their time and have the experience that will ensure the success of my research program. The protected time has also given me preliminary data to inform the development of future research questions.

Interdisciplinary mentorship has been the greatest benefit to me as a BIRCWH scholar. As a general internist and primary care physician, I bring one perspective to my course of study. My interdisciplinary mentorship team includes experienced women’s and mental health services researchers, sociologists, and psychologists. Their input has been critical to ensure that my research is founded in theoretical models. Working with scholars from different disciplines has enriched my program of research and is helping me to become a better scientist.

Carrie McCurdy, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Division of Neonatology
University of Colorado School of Medicine
carrie.mccurdy@ucdenver.edu
Research Focus: Maternal-fetal health, maternal diet, childhood obesity

Initially, the BIRCWH fellowship provided the springboard to start my independent research program with a tenure-track faulty appointment. Additionally, as a BIRCWH scholar, I have had increased opportunities not usually afforded to junior faculty, including the benefits of a structured mentoring team devoted to my career development; access to NIH officers, research leaders, and education through the annual Scholars meeting; and opportunities to interact and collaborate with a new peer group of junior faculty outside of my department. I feel these experiences have significantly increased my chances of success in academic research.

With support from the BIRCWH program, I was able to establish a unique interdisciplinary mentoring team. This interdisciplinary team of mentors has been invaluable in both assisting in my career development and expanding the scope of my research projects by providing opportunities, discussions, and new insights that I would not have had with the traditional department-specific mentor.

Christine McGrath, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor, School of Medicine, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
University of Texas Medical Branch
chmcgrat@utmb.edu
Research Focus: Maternal and child health and nutrition, mother-to-child transmission of HIV, human papillomavirus (HPV) infection, HPV vaccination, health disparities

As a new BIRCWH scholar, I look forward to the opportunity to build upon my previous training and develop new multidisciplinary projects to improve maternal and infant health while continuing to grow as an independent researcher.

My exposure to strong mentors has been critical in helping me to achieve my career goals. I look forward to building new collaborations with mentors and peers in the BIRCWH program. In addition, I hope to receive guidance and support in the grant writing process, as well as advice on career development.
Margaret Erin McLaughlin-Drubin, Ph.D.
Instructor, Medicine
Brigham and Women’s Hospital/Harvard Medical School
mdrubin@rics.bwh.harvard.edu

Research Focus: HPV, epigenetics, histone modifications, E7, oncoprotein, demethylases, epigenetic reprogramming

The BIRCWH program has allowed me the protected time necessary to obtain my own independent funding. In addition, the interdisciplinary nature of the program has broadened the focus of my research. The additional mentoring provided by the BIRCWH program has been critical in my evaluation of my long-term goals, both scientific and career. Moreover, having additional female role models has been essential.

Susan Meffert, M.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry
University of California, San Francisco
susan.meffert@ucsf.edu

Research Focus: Gender-based violence among HIV-positive women, posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, HIV adherence, HIV progression, interventional mental health research for underserved HIV-positive women

I received the BIRCWH award in 2011 and it has already proven to be an invaluable source of mentorship and support. The educational seminars are superb and the individually tailored mentorship and personal interest BIRCWH takes in its scholars is unmatched by any K-award program.

BIRCWH mentorship is unique in its combination of programmatic support with personalized mentorship. It is clear that the BIRCWH program is invested in its scholars’ success. The strategic guidance, encouragement, and enthusiasm offered by BIRCWH program directors at UCSF have an enormous positive impact on junior investigators.

Briana Mezuk, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Epidemiology and Community Health
Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine
bmezuk@vcu.edu

Research Focus: Psychiatric epidemiology, aging, psychiatric-medical comorbidity

Being able to interact with investigators from disciplines outside my own has helped me to become more innovative and creative in my research. Mentoring has been vital at every point in my career, and the BIRCWH program is no exception. In particular, the feedback I receive from my mentor on preparing grant proposals has been especially helpful.
Marci R. Mitchell, Ph.D.
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Yale University School of Medicine
marci.mitchell@yale.edu

Research Focus: Addiction, impulsivity, risk taking, drug use, neuroimaging, sex differences

The BIRCWH program has provided the opportunity for unmatched support and mentorship in both the preclinical and clinical aspects of my research interests. It has also provided me with important resources allowing me to develop my own independent interdisciplinary research path.

Being able to meet one-on-one with respective mentors has been extremely helpful in setting up the best plan for advancing my career and aligning the steps needed to become a successful independent researcher.

Lisa Molix, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Social and Personality
Tulane University
lmolix@tulane.edu

Research Focus: Physical and psychological health among members of marginalized groups, intergroup relations, and the intersections between these areas

The BIRCWH program has provided me with mentorship and protected time to aid me in achieving research independence. Aspects of the mentoring that are especially beneficial to me are mentoring in cardiovascular health research, creating timelines, and goal setting.

Margaret M. Moran-Santa Maria, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences
Medical University of South Carolina
moranm@musc.edu

Research Focus: Neuroimaging, substance use disorders, stress, sex/gender differences

BIRCWH has given me the opportunity to train in neuroimaging, allowing me to explore the neurobiological mechanisms of substance use disorders in clinical populations.

I have two excellent mentors who have provided me with practical knowledge in neuroimaging, grant writing, manuscript preparation, and clinical analytical data skills. I meet with my mentors regularly and they also maintain an open door policy which is essential for meeting grant deadlines. In addition, these meetings have given them an opportunity to assess my strengths and, since they are not afraid to challenge me, to work on my weaknesses. They reward my efforts by providing me with career opportunities (conference presentations, membership in national scientific societies, and by facilitating collaborations both on and off campus).
Melissa (Missy) Morrow, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Biomedical Engineering, Department of Orthopedic Surgery
Mayo Clinic
morrow.melissa@mayo.edu

Research Focus: Sex differences in knee osteoarthritis, shoulder biomechanics, human activity monitoring

The BIRCWH program has brought a wealth of opportunities my way that have all positively affected my career. Through career and personal development training, exceptional mentoring, additional education, networking, and research and salary support, the BIRCWH program has given me the freedom and support to pursue my desired career path. The BIRCWH program has allowed me to make the first step into my independent research career and I am thankful. Especially beneficial to me have been the one-on-one conversations with senior faculty who have helped guide my way, have edited my proposals, and have fought for my success right alongside me. Additionally, the mentoring that pushed me into additional educational opportunities has been extremely rewarding.

Jason S. Moser, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Clinical Psychology Group
Michigan State University
jmoser@msu.edu

Research Focus: Anxiety, depression, event-related brain potentials (ERPs), ovarian hormones, sex differences, cognitive control, menstrual cycle

The BIRCWH program has provided me with the time, support, and resources to further develop a line of inquiry that bridges my work on neurocognitive abnormalities in anxiety and depression with neuroendocrinology and sex differences research. The research funds have helped me get this integrative line of work off the ground so as to gather pilot data for large-scale grant applications. Overall, this program is affording me the opportunity to establish myself as an interdisciplinary scholar tackling questions related to women’s mental health.

The mentoring I have received thus far as part of the BIRCWH program has been invaluable on several levels. In a very practical sense, my mentors have helped me with designing and implementing a project that involves many new aspects for me (e.g., collection of saliva). My mentors also serve as role models for how I would want my career to look. Finally, they provide an environment rich with intellectual stimulation.

Lanay M. Mudd, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Kinesiology
Michigan State University
mudd@msu.edu

Research Focus: Physical activity, perinatal health, developmental origins of disease

The BIRCWH program has given me the opportunity to expand my research scope by gaining training in new fields and focusing on interdisciplinary work. I have been able to
attend new conferences, exposing me to different ideas and allowing me to establish new collaborations. I have also had the opportunity to do some of the pilot work needed to establish a strong line of research to improve pregnancy health.

Having formal mentors outside of my home department has been beneficial in many ways. I feel more connected across campus, not only from interacting with them, but also by interacting with individuals who they suggest as important collaborators. It is also helpful to run my research ideas past mentors who have been very successful, but in fields different from my own. They have been able to point out flaws I was unaware of and to suggest additions to study ideas that strengthen them. It has also been helpful to have mentors that keep me accountable to accomplish the tasks I have proposed.

Laura Palanker Musselman, Ph.D.
Research Instructor, Division of Endocrinology, Metabolism, and Lipid Research, Department of Medicine
Washington University School of Medicine
lpalanke@dom.wustl.edu
Research Focus: Type 2 diabetes, caloric excess, hormone signaling, genetics, Drosophila melanogaster

The BIRCWH has provided me with the money and time to embark upon an independent research career after my postdoctoral fellowship. With the BIRCWH’s help, I have developed an independent research program and have been awarded pilot grants that, I hope, will contribute to a sustainable research program. The BIRCWH has also broadened my expertise and helped me to network with scientists from around the country. Peer mentoring and my mentorship committee have both been especially beneficial to me. Personal advice from experts, including senior faculty and NIH officials, has contributed to grant proposals, job applications, and manuscript preparation and submission.

Rebekah H. Nagler, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, College of Liberal Arts
University of Minnesota
nagle026@umn.edu
Research Focus: Health communication, cancer communication, communication inequalities and health disparities, women’s health, community-engaged research

The BIRCWH program has allowed me to pursue my growing interests in women’s health, which emerged during my graduate and postdoctoral work in communication, public health, and cancer prevention. Thanks to the protected time and research support provided by BIRCWH, I have been able to focus on my research on the effects of cancer communication—specifically, the effects of media coverage of scientific conflict and controversy—on women in general and underserved women in particular.

I have been fortunate to receive mentoring from an interdisciplinary team of leading research scholars. Through these interactions, I have deepened my understanding of relevant theories, strengthened my research skills, and improved my manuscript and grant writing. Additionally, I have benefited from the career development training offered as part of the University of Minnesota BIRCWH curriculum.
Heather B. Neuman, M.D., M.S., FACS
Associate Professor, Department of Surgery, Division of General Surgery, Section of Surgical Oncology
University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health
neuman@surgery.wisc.edu

Research Focus: Breast cancer, survivorship, follow-up care, shared decision-making, decision aids, health disparities

The BIRCWH program has provided me with the protected time to develop my research program and continue my career development. Further, it has formalized my mentoring relationships, further increasing the likelihood of success in my research trajectory.

Dawn Newcomb, Ph.D.
Research Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, Division of Allergy, Pulmonary, and Critical Care Medicine
Vanderbilt University Medical Center
dawn.newcomb@vanderbilt.edu

Research Focus: Estrogen, severe asthma, therapeutics targeting IL-13, IL-17A production from Th17 cells

The BIRCWH program has given me the opportunity to interact with a wide range of scientists in disciplines outside of my expertise. These interactions will help steer my project in exciting new directions, and the BIRCWH program will play a vital role in helping develop a successful translational project focusing on the role of estrogen on Th17 cell cytokine production in severe asthma.

The BIRCWH program and my mentor, Stokes Peebles, Jr., have provided exceptional mentoring by providing feedback on projects, workshops on grant writing and career development, and practical advice whenever needed.

Carrie M. Nielson, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor, Public Health and Preventive Medicine
Oregon Health and Science University
nielsoca@ohsu.edu

Research Focus: Genetic epidemiology of osteoporosis, risk factors for and prevention of fracture, sex differences in bone strength and loss, rare variants, phosphate regulation

My research leading up to the BIRCWH program focused on the epidemiology of osteoporosis in a large cohort of aging men. I was able to evaluate the role of rare genetic variants on bone mineral density and hip fracture in this cohort. The contribution of rare variants to genetic risk for osteoporosis may be significant. The BIRCWH program has given me an opportunity to evaluate the associations in women and to expand my understanding of osteoporosis among aging women. The program also allows me to gain additional valuable training and mentorship in statistical genetics and bone biology. I have benefited by mentorship from those who work closest with me on bone biology and genetics, from frequent meetings with fellow BIRCWH scholars and mentors to critique each other’s work, and from well-defined expectations of progress in my research.
Robin Osterman, Ph.D., RNC-OB, PMHCNS-BC
Assistant Professor, College of Nursing
University of Cincinnati
robin.osterman@uc.edu

Research Focus: Behavior change, alcohol, pregnancy, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, motivational interviewing

The BIRCWH program has afforded me the opportunity, funding, and time to focus on my trajectory as an independent research scientist. Through the development, implementation, and analyses of a randomized controlled trial testing the effectiveness of a motivational interviewing intervention to decrease prenatal alcohol use, I now have preliminary data with which to increase my number of publications, while providing the groundwork for my next NIH grant. I have gained valuable knowledge and experience in the logistics of conducting research with a vulnerable population of pregnant women, while collecting sensitive participant information, obtaining certificates of confidentiality, training research assistants, and handling project and data management. In addition, the BIRCWH program has allowed me the time and funding to attend workshops, conferences, and courses related to research integrity and ethics, grant writing, and NIH mechanisms/submission requirements.

The interdisciplinary mentoring provided by the BIRCWH program has been invaluable in professional networking with successful NIH-funded mentors and colleagues who offer sage advice and experience critical to the success of the new investigator. I have had the opportunity to meet and work with researchers in many institutions and departments affiliated with my university medical center. These relationships will provide the foundation for future interdisciplinary studies related to my research interests.

Harsh B. Pathak, Ph.D.
Research Assistant Professor, Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine
University of Kansas Medical Center
hpathak@kumc.edu

Research Focus: Endometrial cancer, ovarian cancer, DNA hypermethylation, early detection

The BIRCWH program is providing me with the opportunity to perform pilot studies, which are essential for me to have a competitive application when I apply for extramural and intramural funding. It has given me the chance to form new collaborations, have undergraduate students assist with experiments over the summer months to investigate new lines of research, and allow me to focus on writing manuscripts and grant submissions.

The multi-disciplined mentoring, workshops, and seminars that are available to me as a BIRCWH scholar are opportunities that I would otherwise not have. The discussions generated during monthly meetings with the current and past BIRCWH Scholars and our BIRCWH Program Director are important to me and have been very insightful.
Martha E. Payne, Ph.D., M.P.H., R.D.
Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Division of Geriatric Psychiatry
Duke University
martha.payne@duke.edu

Research Focus: Diet, obesity, late-life depression, brain health, physical function, aging

Participation in BIRCWH has been invaluable to me as I transition to the role of an independent scientist. In particular, BIRCWH provides for strong interdisciplinary mentors and the opportunity to engage in training in data analysis techniques, grant writing, and professional skills. BIRCWH participation provides me with protected research time to conduct studies on the influence of diet and obesity on depression and brain health in older women. In addition, I am able to continue my ongoing research collaborations, write manuscripts, and develop grant applications.

Interdisciplinary mentoring has been particularly helpful, as has guidance on navigating the grant submission process.

Natalie Pierre Joseph, M.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics
Boston University School of Medicine
natalie.pierrejoseph@bmc.org

Research Focus: Cervical cancer prevention and control, Haitian immigrant community, HPV vaccination of minorities, disparities in cervical cancer incidence

Through the protected time, mentorship and support of the BIRCWH program I recently received an American Cancer Society Career Development Award.

During my time on BIRCWH I developed a trusting relationship with my mentors, knowing their guidance would enable me to push forward to a successful research career as an independent investigator. Because of the strong desire to excel and succeed I had an ongoing urge to keep on working and working hard all the time, spending all of my free time on manuscript development, data analysis, grant development. Through my mentors on BIRCWH I learned to make work and family time more efficient and productive.

Beth Prairie, M.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences
University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine
prairieba2@upmc.edu

Research Focus: Perimenopausal and menopausal symptoms, including depression, sexual dysfunction, and sleep disturbances, in midlife women
Lisa M. Privette Vinnedge, Ph.D.
Research Instructor, Department of Oncology, Cancer and Blood Diseases Institute Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center and University of Cincinnati
lisa.privette@cchmc.org

Research Focus: Breast cancer, chemotherapeutic drug resistance, cancer stem cells, Wnt signaling

The BIRCWH program has been instrumental in facilitating my transition to an independent investigator in the field of breast cancer development and treatment. I have been able to conduct research that will be the foundation for future NIH grant submissions while receiving invaluable mentoring for advancing my career.

The many sources of mentoring have been the most important aspect of the BIRCWH program for me. In particular, I have benefitted greatly from the many grant-writing courses and career-development meetings with senior faculty members. Finally, with the help of my mentors and other participants in the program, I have been able to network and meet other scientists and clinicians that have contributed to advancing my career in clinically relevant basic breast cancer research.

Gail B. Rattinger, Pharm.D., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Pharmaceutical Health Services Research Department University of Maryland, Baltimore School of Pharmacy gratting@rx.umaryland.edu

Research Focus: Health services and comparative effectiveness research, geriatric populations, sex differences in Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias, medication adherence, pharmacogenomics

The BIRCWH award has given me the opportunity to develop skills in the area of longitudinal data analysis and focus on learning the Medicare database with the newly available Part D prescription drug data as well as the nursing home (Minimum Data Set) database, both very relevant to older adults and women. The formal mentoring has allowed me to jump-start my delving into this area through hands-on working sessions with my mentors and access to their time for review of my work. Further, through the formal mentoring, the BIRCWH program has afforded me both the time and exposure to build collaborations with others outside of my institution working in the area of Alzheimer’s disease. In turn, these collaborations will result in future multidisciplinary grant submissions in the area of Alzheimer’s disease and its impact on women.

My individual working meetings with my primary mentor are particularly beneficial to me because they provide me with time to explore and review technical approaches in detail. Further, the interactions allow for in-depth discussions of issues as they evolve with enough time for problem solving. Interactions with my other mentors are most useful in the area of framing research questions and providing informational leads.
Limor Raz, Ph.D.
Research Fellow, Department of Surgery and Physiology
Mayo Clinic
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Research Focus: Women’s health, brain, menopause, cardiovascular disease

The BIRCWH program has transformed me into an independent thinker and a leader in the field of women’s health. The program has afforded me many valuable experiences, including attending conferences in my area of study; spending one-on-one time with my mentors preparing for presentations, discussing the literature, and being involved in every aspect of my research project; and, most importantly, attending leadership and enrichment BIRCWH workshops.

Jennifer Reed, M.D.
Associate Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Division of Emergency Medicine
Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center and the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine
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Research Focus: Sexually transmitted infections, quality improvement, adolescents

The BIRCWH program has allowed me to transition from a clinician educator role in pediatric emergency medicine to a career focused on becoming an independently funded researcher. It has provided me with protected time to further develop research collaborations that are vital to my success as a researcher. Furthermore, the BIRCWH program has given me opportunities to participate in the community aspect of women’s health and expand my knowledge within this field.

The BIRCWH program has provided an opportunity to engage key mentors from multiple disciplines to help guide my research career. Although all of my mentors are female physicians pursuing clinical research, each is in a different subspecialty and brings a unique perspective. My mentors have provided valued professional advice as to next steps in my research career as well as ways to navigate the world of academia. Additionally, they have all provided insight on a personal level as to the challenges one may face as a woman balancing roles as an academic researcher, a mother, and a wife.

Jennifer L. Rehm, M.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Division of Pediatric Endocrinology and Diabetes
University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health
jrehm@wisc.edu

Research Focus: Nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), obesity, ectopic adiposity, inflammation and insulin resistance

The BIRCWH program award will provide excellent career and research mentorship, an academic environment designed to nurture critical thinking and professionalism, and access to well-established community and inter-departmental partnerships necessary to develop and conduct clinical investigations. Together, these resources will provide the basis for the development of an independent career in clinical research focusing on the relationship between ectopic adipose tissue and metabolic complications, including insulin resistance, PCOS, and NAFLD, and the development of targeted diagnosis and treatment of fatty liver and
associated metabolic disease, and will provide support while I continue to develop the collaborative relationships necessary to conduct a large-scale intervention trial.

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**Carmela M. Reichel, Ph.D.**

Research Assistant Professor, Department of Neurosciences  
Medical University of South Carolina  
reichel@musc.edu

**Research Focus:** Addiction, relapse, sex differences, treatment approaches, dopamine and glutamate pharmacology, neuroimaging, cocaine, methamphetamine

My research career is flourishing by participation in the BIRCWH program. Being a BIRCWH scholar has allowed me to concentrate on obtaining independent funding as well as develop a focused line of research. The mentoring I receive from Dr. Ron See and Dr. Jane Joseph is truly outstanding. Both are extremely supportive of my career and research goals. They facilitate my contact with other researchers, give critical and purposeful feedback on grants writing, and provide intellectual challenges.

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**Nuriya Robinson, M.D.**

Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology  
University of Illinois, Chicago  
nrobin22@uic.edu

**Research Focus:** Global women’s health, postpartum hemorrhage prevention, Safe Motherhood

The BIRCWH program has provided me with the protected time needed to further my research pursuits in global women’s health, fulfill the requirements of a Master’s degree in Public Health, and continue on the path to becoming an independent investigator. Within a global context, interdisciplinary collaborations are essential, and the BIRCWH program’s focus on developing relationships with others in diverse fields will assist me in expanding my research agenda and furthering my career in academia.

My mentors offer a wealth of research knowledge, significant global health experience, and tremendous insight into navigating the world of academia. Their investment in my career plans and research interests will positively impact my growth and development as I begin to transition to an independent researcher.
Leah H. Rubin, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Women’s Mental Health Research Program
University of Illinois, Chicago
lrubin@psych.uic.edu

Research Focus: Female-specific risk factors of mental health and cognition, sex steroid hormones, oxytocin, stress hormones, schizophrenia, HIV-infected women

The BIRCWH program is ideal at this early point in my career because it is helping to facilitate my transition and advancement as an independent researcher as it provides research training, direct mentorship, and career development in a supportive environment. By providing independent salary support and protected research time, the award allows me to continue on my line of research in women’s mental health while developing my independence.

With the help of the BIRCWH, I have been able to establish a team of leading experts in my line of research who have been critical in guiding my learning and study-development efforts as well as helping to transition myself to an independent researcher. My current mentors meet with me regularly and provide general oversight to aspects of my training and general guidance as I work to integrate and apply what I am continuously learning. Their mentorship has been and continues to be an invaluable component of my career development during the BIRCWH, in large part because their interests and expertise coincide with my developing research interests and projects.

Natasha M. Ruth, M.D., M.S.
Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, Pediatric Rheumatology and Immunology
Medical University of South Carolina
ruthn@musc.edu

Research Focus: Pathophysiology of neuropsychiatric manifestations in pediatric lupus, neurocognitive dysfunction in pediatric lupus, neurocognitive dysfunction in offspring of adult patients with lupus, anti-NMDA receptor antibodies and their association with neurocognitive dysfunction

The BIRCWH program has allowed me to pursue my research goals of providing greater insight into the neuropsychiatric manifestations in pediatric lupus patients. Cognitive dysfunction is one of the least understood manifestations of neuropsychiatric lupus. It is very disabling and distressing to the patient. In order to fully address the complications of neuropsychiatric lupus, it is necessary to use a multidisciplinary team approach when it comes to both patient care and research including: rheumatology, neuropsychology, neurology, and radiology. The BIRCWH program not only has given me preliminary funding to pursue a project looking at the association of specific antibodies with neurocognitive function in pediatric lupus patients and their first-degree relatives, but the program has also given me a platform that allows me to interact with other sub-specialties so as to broaden many aspects of my research.

The aspect of mentoring that I have received through the BIRCWH program that has been most beneficial to me is the ability to discuss my research with leaders in the field in not only rheumatology and immunology but also within the division of neurosciences and neuropsychology. My mentors have taught me how to stay up to date with the current literature relating to my project and have provided me with new ideas and new ways to look at specific problems. They have also provided me with the resources and personal contacts to help me to communicate with other disciplines so as to improve the quality of my project.
Julienne Rutherford, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Oral Biology, College of Dentistry
University of Illinois, Chicago
ruther4d@uic.edu

Research Focus: Female reproductive biology and health in evolutionary context, intrauterine environment, fetus, placenta, growth and development, developmental/fetal origins of health and disease, health disparities, evolutionary biology

I am still in the very early stages of my BIRCWH fellowship but already the guarantee of protected time from teaching and administrative responsibilities has made it possible to map out the next two years of career development. That security is a wonderful boon; at the time of the BIRCWH award I was already in the midst of beginning some new projects (i.e. just received funding) at the same time I was writing several papers concurrently and was wondering how I would be able to accomplish all that I had planned. Being a BIRCWH scholar means I have not only the time to do so, but also the mentorship to help me both develop and pursue the most logical plan for me. It also has given me greater focus on how best to pursue the funding opportunities that will enable me to launch and maintain an independent research program.

I have had wonderful phone and in-person conversations with all of my mentors. The greatest benefit thus far has been developing my career plan with their input. In addition to emphasizing the importance of successfully applying for research grants, they have given me invaluable advice related to questions of authorship, how independence is demonstrated, differences in cultural norms across disciplines when it comes to both scholarship and working relationships, and live-work balance. In many ways, I feel the technical aspects of my work are in good shape (although I have many new things I want to learn to do!), and it is this mentoring that is the greatest part of the BIRCWH program.

Erik Rytting, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
University of Texas Medical Branch
erik.rytting@utmb.edu

Research Focus: Nanomedicine, placental drug transport, drug delivery, nanotoxicology, pharmacokinetics, medication during pregnancy, nanoparticles, drug targeting

The protected time for research is what I see as being the key element of the BIRCWH program. Several other organized activities have also been helpful, such as events discussing grant writing, familiarity with various types of grants, publishing, time organization, etc. I have appreciated the arrangements for an external review of our grants before they go out.

My mentor is fantastic. He has been very supportive in helping me set up my lab and have it equipped appropriately. I have appreciated his suggestions regarding my grants, but even more, he shares his own experiences to help me avoid mistakes that might cost me too much of my time. I can tell that he is interested in my success and sincere in his advice.
Sumona Saha, M.D., M.S.
Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology
University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health
ssaha@medicine.wisc.edu

Research Focus: Inflammatory bowel disease, pregnancy outcomes, women’s gastrointestinal health training and education

The BIRCWH program has been instrumental to the launch of my research career. I earned a Master of Science degree in the Department of Population Health at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in May 2012. My thesis work examining dysmenorrhea in women with Crohn’s disease is now being reviewed by a major journal in gastroenterology. I have also used my time in the BIRCWH program to participate in other research projects. Since starting the program, I have been lead author or co-author on nine peer-reviewed published papers, five book chapters, and numerous abstracts. I have also been an invited speaker at several national meetings, have been asked to serve on a national task force for women’s health education in gastroenterology, and have contributed to the creation of two new clinical services at my institution, a Gastrointestinal Disorders in Pregnancy Clinic and a Transition Clinic for adolescents with inflammatory bowel disease. I am very grateful to the BIRCWH program for providing me these opportunities at this critical point in my career.

Sana Salih, M.D., M.M.S.
Assistant Professor, Division of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health
salih@wisc.edu

Research Focus: Fertility preservation in female cancer patients, ovarian biology, infertility, reproductive endocrinology, assisted reproductive technology

The BIRCWH scholar program has made it possible for me to pursue a research career by providing protected research time and outstanding mentors. It facilitated my transition from a plain practicing physician to an inquisitive physician scientist who values research and strives to make strides to solve intractable problems in women’s health and advance the field. It instilled in me the love to genuinely teach and mentor junior colleagues as I was genuinely mentored and guided along the way. The BIRCWH experience has been one of the most valued opportunities in my career.

My mentors have genuine interest in the success of my research career. They were kind yet transparent and genuine. They had great ability to lead by example. They were patient and understanding and did not give up on me even when things did not go smoothly. They were very supportive and committed and actively contributed to reading, editing, and helping with my grant submission despite short notice and their busy schedules. They were patient and tolerant and expressed interest and attention to my career as a whole—including my clinic commitment, which is important for physician scientists. They were just awesome, and I am so happy to have had the opportunity to know them. This has been an excellent experience.
Sumathi Sankaran-Walters, Ph.D., M.B.B.S.
Assistant Research Microbiologist, Medical Microbiology and Immunology
University of California, Davis
ssankara@ucdavis.edu

Research Focus: Mucosal health and aging in women, HIV-associated mucosal pathogenesis in women, effects of estrogen on mucosal health

The BIRCWH program has provided me with funding that allows me to further research in the field of mucosal health in women. In doing so I am able to further my career. More importantly, through the BIRCWH program I now have three mentors who complement each other and provide me with support and help me achieve my goals. This funding also gives me protected time for research and training. The monthly journal clubs, research seminars, and work-in-progress seminars provide me with an opportunity to discuss my work as well as that of others, which broadens my horizons.

Through the BIRCWH program I have three mentors. Dr. Dandekar is an expert in the field of mucosal immunology and HIV. Under her guidance I have gained immense experience in the field. She has also introduced me to relevant HIV research networks that are critical to maintaining a competitive edge. Dr. Gold is an expert in the field of epidemiology while Dr. Young is an expert in the field of geriatrics. Together they provide me with career guidance as well as research guidance.

Irene E. Schauer, M.D., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, Division of Endocrinology, Metabolism, and Diabetes
University of Colorado, Denver
irene.schauer@ucdenver.edu

Research Focus: Insulin resistance, fatty acids, cardiovascular disease, mitochondrial function, exercise capacity, vascular function, estrogen, sex-based differences, sympathetic nervous system

The BIRCWH program and the funding support that I received through the program are the reason that I have been able to stay in an academic medicine position and to continue to do clinical research. In this tight funding environment and with clinical responsibilities, I was in a position of needing to look for a clinical practice position when I was awarded a BIRCWH grant for 2 to 3 years. I recently got a priority score of 16 for an individual K23 award and am awaiting the final funding decision on this grant. I anticipate getting this award within the next year and being able to continue my academy career. None of this would have been possible without the BIRCWH program. In addition, the program has provided valuable mentorship and training opportunities and has fostered collaborative efforts (including in the above K23) which would probably not have developed otherwise.

Through my association with the BIRCWH program I have had access to additional mentors who have provided valuable advice and support in both career and research direction. I have had more guidance in my career path, approach to this career path, research design and methods, and life balance issues in the last 2 years than in my previous life history combined. I think the most valuable part of this mentorship has been the many years of combined experience that have weighed in on grant applications, career development, and research study design. I had a previous career as a Ph.D. scientist prior to going to medical school, but I did not learn the true meaning of mentorship until I became an endocrinology fellow and, subsequently, a BIRCWH scholar.
Rebecca J. Schmidt, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Public Health Sciences, The MIND Institute
University of California, Davis, School of Medicine
rjschmidt@ucdavis.edu

Research Focus: Neurodevelopment, autism, gene x environment interaction, epigenetics, nutrition, molecular epidemiology, maternal and child health

The BIRCWH program has allowed protected time for me to pursue new fields of research and additional education and training in areas of professional development, statistical techniques, nutrition during development, and epigenetics, which will position me well for future career success, and would not have been feasible without BIRCWH. In addition, the research funds have allowed me to develop promising preliminary data for future grant funding opportunities. The feedback from the mentors and other fellows has been invaluable for refining my research and career goals.

Having input and suggestions from the BIRCWH program mentors and peers who are from outside my field is especially constructive. Collaborations and guidance from my individual interdisciplinary BIRCWH mentors have allowed me to successfully move forward in uncharted research territories.

Julie K. Schwarz, M.D., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Radiation Oncology
Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis
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Research Focus: Cervical cancer, imaging sites of metastasis before they happen, identifying novel biomarkers of FDG-PET metabolic response

Deepa Sekhar, M.D., M.Sc.
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine
dsekhar@hmc.psu.edu

Research Focus: Iron deficiency in adolescent females, pediatric preventive care

My BIRCWH grant on “Detection of Iron Deficiency Among Adolescent Females” began in January 2013. I am learning how to approach analysis of a large-scale national dataset and the limitations and benefits of this type of data. I am gaining a broader understanding of behavioral health intervention strategies and statistics which will play into my future research endeavors. As a clinician, this time and experience will be invaluable in terms of giving me the background to take the next step in my research work and funding.

The unique piece about mentoring through BIRCWH is that it brings together young investigators from very different disciplines. Understanding how different researchers from varying backgrounds (psychology, sociology, nutrition, pediatrics) approach a similar problem is very eye-opening. Specifically, it has already been helpful in terms of improving the clarity of my writing for a wider audience.
Rashmi K. Sharma, M.D., M.H.S.
Assistant Professor, Division of Hospital Medicine, Section of Palliative Medicine
Northwestern University
rasharma@nmh.org

**Research Focus: Health disparities, communication, palliative care, decision making**

The BIRCWH program has provided me with the time and mentorship I needed to gather pilot data and draft a more competitive application for federal funding. This support has been particularly helpful as I try and build an independent research career in a time where research funding is quite limited.

More frequent meetings with my mentors as part of the program have enabled me to maintain research productivity and troubleshoot any barriers to both my research projects and career development.

Patricia Silveyra, Ph.D., M.Sc.
Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Center for Host Defense, Inflammation, and Lung Disease Research
Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine
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**Research Focus: Gender differences in pulmonary disease susceptibility, inflammation, oxidative stress, microRNA regulation of lung gene expression, acute lung injury**

Participating in the BIRCWH program has been an excellent resource for my career development. The program provided me with protected time to further develop my independent research goals and establish long-lasting collaborations. The comprehensive curriculum in professional development, focused mentoring, and networking opportunities that encouraged collaborative interdisciplinary research were the most beneficial aspects of this program to my career.

The BIRCWH program allowed me to choose several mentors based on my research interests, and encouraged me to meet them regularly and discuss project milestones and troubleshooting. This aspect has been extremely valuable in terms of time management and professional development. The program also provided peer mentoring through regular meetings with other scholars. This provided us with opportunities to discuss common challenges of junior investigators, share intellectual and funding resources, and peer-review manuscripts and grant proposals.

Wolfgang Singer, M.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Neurology
Mayo Clinic
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**Research Focus: Orthostatic intolerance and postural tachycardia syndrome (POTS), gender disparities and hormonal influence on autonomic disorders, pathophysiology of autonomic disorders, treatment of orthostatic hypotension**

I am just starting as a BIRCWH scholar. I am very excited about the opportunities this program has to offer. I am very much looking forward to working with outstanding mentors and networking with other young investigators.
with similar interests in women’s health across various fields of medicine. I am equally excited about having the support to allow me to acquire novel research techniques, to pursue exciting research ideas, and to complete a certificate program in clinical and translational science. I am confident that this program will allow me to acquire all the tools, experience, and data necessary to successfully apply for independent funding in the near future.

My mentors have been immensely helpful in critically reviewing my application and academic plans. They are committed to providing training opportunities and support, and helping me develop in the role as mentor myself. Just starting out as a BIRCWH scholar, I can already tell that the additional support from my BIRCWH program director and PIs will add immensely to that mentoring experience and will greatly expand networking opportunities for me.

Megan Veenema Smith, Dr.P.H., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor, Departments of Psychiatry, Child Study, and Public Health
Yale University School of Medicine
megan.smith@yale.edu

Research Focus: Perinatal mental health, perinatal smoking, community-based participatory research, health technology interventions to reduce smoking and improve mental health

Training in substance abuse and other addictive behaviors offered through the Yale BIRCWH Scholar program on Women’s Health and Addictive Behaviors has provided me with the didactic learning, mentoring, and research support necessary to transition to an independent investigator in the field of women’s mental health. Specifically, the interdisciplinary training and mentorship received through the Yale BIRCWH Scholar program and its associated scholarly community has supported my efforts to merge several fields of interest, including perinatal, infant and child mental health, and social epidemiology, into a cohesive research program.

I am fortunate to have two extremely intelligent and personable female mentors. Through weekly meetings and almost daily email communication, they have provided encouragement, honest feedback, problem solving, referrals, networking opportunities, and advocacy. I have learned that mentoring can be implicit, in the form of role-modeling as women scientists, as well as explicit, through the activities I have described.

Philip Smith, Ph.D.
Associate Research Scientist, Department of Psychiatry
Yale University School of Medicine
philip.h.smith@yale.edu

Research Focus: Nicotine dependence, tobacco cessation

In only my second month as a BIRCWH scholar, it is already clear the program will open doors for my career. The program provides the opportunity to be surrounded by brilliant scholars and researchers both here at Yale and at other institutions throughout the training, all with a mind for improving women’s health. I am very confident that by the time I leave the program I will be well prepared to take on the next stages in my career and will have a strong sense of my role in women’s health research and advocacy.

Already, my mentors have helped me to narrow my research focus on topics that will have a positive influence on women’s health. We have begun to discuss and plan studies and papers that will have a direct influence on gender-sensitive policy and treatment. I am also very grateful for the opportunity to have expert guides as I transition from a postdoc to an independent researcher.
Betty Smoot, D.P.T.Sc., PT
Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science
University of California, San Francisco
betty.smoot@ucsf.edu

Research Focus: Assessment and treatment of upper extremity impairments related to treatment for breast cancer, lymphedema

The BIRCWH program has provided opportunities to establish new multidisciplinary research collaborations in cancer survivorship and in the assessment and management of breast cancer treatment-related impairments. This program also supports my continued training and, specifically, advanced training in clinical research through the Master’s in Clinical Research program at UCSF. Through this training, I am acquiring the skills needed to conduct independent patient-oriented research in cancer survivorship. In addition, receiving the BIRCWH award has facilitated my career advancement at UCSF, increased my exposure to other scientists through the BIRCWH seminars and the K Scholars Program, and allowed me the time to focus on writing and disseminating my research.

I have an outstanding and selfless mentor team that has been key to my professional growth and success. My primary mentor provides advice, career guidance, and individualized research training and mentorship, as well as access to her dataset and research team. The BIRCWH directors also provide mentorship that includes goal setting, time management, leadership, effective communication, and dissemination of our work. This has been a tremendously rewarding and invaluable opportunity.

Matia B. Solomon, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Departments of Psychology and Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience
University of Cincinnati
matia.solomon@uc.edu

Research Focus: Depression, anxiety, stress, sex differences, neuroscience, brain, adolescent health, antidepressant efficacy, estrogen, progesterone

My research program is geared towards understanding the neurobiology of depression in females. The BIRCWH award has allowed me to have protected time so that I can establish myself as a leader in women’s mental health. This award has afforded me the opportunity to interact with researchers from different backgrounds. As a result of these diverse interactions, my research portfolio has been greatly enhanced. The skills that I will gain under this funding mechanism will allow me to take a multidisciplinary approach towards understanding the pathophysiology of depression in women.

I have learned a tremendous amount from my mentors. They have been especially beneficial in giving me sound advice about how to build a successful research career while balancing teaching.
Kimber L. Stanhope, Ph.D., M.S., RD
Associate Research Nutritional Biologist, Department of Molecular Biology, School of Veterinary Medicine
University of California, Davis
klstanhope@ucdavis.edu

Research Focus: Dietary sugar, dietary macronutrients, reproductive hormones, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome

The BIRCWH program has been instrumental in expanding the focus of my research to include investigations relevant to women’s health. This includes a new investigation of the role of estrogen in the development of diabetes in a novel rat model of type 2 diabetes, and a more rigorous focus on the interactions between diet and gender in my ongoing research. I anticipate my research program becoming more multidisciplinary due to interactions with the other BIRCWH and K12 scholars and exposure to their research projects.

Strong mentorship has been important throughout my research career. Due to the BIRCWH program, I have acquired several new mentors who are or will be of great benefit to my career and research program development. These include the directors of the University of California, Davis, BIRCWH and new mentors in reproductive endocrinology, metabolomics, grant writing, and statistics.

Julia R. Steinberg, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Health Psychology area
University of California, San Francisco
julia.steinberg@ucsf.edu

Research Focus: Psychological aspects of reproductive health

The BIRCWH program has allowed me to form new collaborations with many others (including the pioneers) in my field, begin to expand my area of expertise (I’ve only been in BIRCWH for 8 months), and meet many others doing important research in various aspects of women’s health.

I have received mentoring from various faculty members both inside and outside my department. All have been helpful in thinking through the next steps of my career.

Maya Styner, M.D.
Instructor, Department of Medicine, Division of Endocrinology
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
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Research Focus: Mechanical control mesenchymal stem cell fate, mesenchymal stem cell differentiation, osteoporosis, obesity, endoplasmic reticulum stress

The BIRCWH grant has had a significant positive impact on my career. The funding carries great importance in that it allows me to conduct research with a higher level of independence. The BIRCWH afforded me the opportunity to hire laboratory personnel and this has been an important transition, allowing for increased productivity and for the development of leadership skills. Additionally this award has increased my departmental support, provided for a structured approach to mentorship, and clearly improved my standing as I apply for future NIH awards. My mentors have offered grant writing support and the combined wisdom from a community of past and present BIRCWH scholars.
Kazuaki Takabe, M.D., Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Department of Surgery, Division of Surgical Oncology
Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine
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Research Focus: Breast cancer, sphingosine-1-phosphate, tumor microenvironment, angiogenesis, lymphangiogenesis

The BIRCWH program has been instrumental for me not only in securing my faculty position, but also in securing protected time and obtaining mentoring from different departments. With the BIRCWH career development program, I was able to be productive and obtain my independent R01 funding.

Especially beneficial to me was the monthly meeting within our institution and the annual meeting in Bethesda.

Costellia H. Talley, Ph.D., ACNS-BC
Assistant Professor, College of Nursing
Michigan State University College of Nursing
talleyc@msu.edu

Research Focus: Health disparities, cancer, functional status of older adults

The BIRCWH program has allowed me to have protected time to develop my long-term program of research focused on health disparities, with a specific focus on black women with cancer. During this time, I completed a pilot study that will provide the preliminary data needed to submit for grant funding. The BIRCWH program has allowed me to pursue research in an academic setting as I transition from the clinical setting.

I had the opportunity to receive mentorship from a multidisciplinary team of researchers. My mentors have been outstanding in providing advice, guidance, and their expertise in scholarship and professional development. In addition, my mentors have facilitated networking opportunities.

Kristine M.C. Talley, Ph.D., RN, GNP-BC
Assistant Professor, School of Nursing
University of Minnesota
carl0106@umn.edu

Research Focus: Disability prevention in frail older women, urinary incontinence, falls, frailty, geriatric syndromes

As a new assistant professor, being a BIRCWH scholar allows me to focus my research program early in my career and make a sustained impact on the health of frail older women. As a new BIRCWH scholar, I cannot yet appreciate all the opportunities my mentors will provide. However, preparing the proposal has already allowed me to work with my mentors and I appreciate having their support at the beginning of my academic career. They have already introduced me to national experts in my area of research and I am excited to begin collaborating with them. Creating the career development plan provides a roadmap for my
mentors and me to follow and will keep me on track with achieving my career goals and with improving the health of frail older women.

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**Darlene K. Taylor, Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor, Department of Chemistry  
North Carolina Central University  
dtaylor@nccu.edu

**Research Focus: Uterine fibroids, breast cancer, smart polymers for drug delivery, nanocarriers**

Prior to BIRCWH, my teaching load was 12 contact hours, a teaching load that made it impossible to be a productive research scientist. I now have time to obtain results, analyze them, and disseminate them at national and local technical meetings. I have attracted external funds for equipment and student support. A provisional patent has been filed around my nanocarrier invention for local therapy to uterine fibroids. Publications are currently being prepared. Finally, the additional training through courses at Duke University has help me position myself a contributor to not just the chemistry but also the biology of women’s diseases. This is a new field research area for me since my training is polymer physical chemistry. None of this would have been possible without the protected time that BIRCWH has afforded me.

Shadowing productive mentors like Donald McDonald and Phyllis Leppert has been invaluable. I’ve learned firsthand how to multitask and be productive. Grant writing seminars and tips have also been very beneficial. Various seminars on budget aspects of proposals, time management, and strategies for directing a research laboratory have all given me a competitive advantage over some of my colleagues here at NC Central.

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**Azure B. Thompson, Dr.P.H., M.P.H.**

Research Scientist  
The Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University  
athompson@casacolumbia.org

**Research Focus: Health equity, health disparities, social determinants of health, tobacco use, drug use, addiction**

The BIRCWH program has impacted my career by helping me to further develop my independent program of research on racial disparities in life course patterns of drug use among women. The BIRCWH program has enabled this progress by facilitating mentoring relationships and providing protected time for me to develop manuscripts and grants. Moreover, the BIRCWH program’s emphasis on advancing women’s health through research has reinforced my belief that advocacy is essential to my career as a health researcher.

I found the protected time to develop my program of research with guidance from my mentors to be one of the most important aspects of the BIRCWH program. The aspect of the mentoring that was especially beneficial was the regular advisement meetings, during which I had the opportunity to seek guidance on career development issues and discuss and clarify my program of research.
Bharat Thyagarajan, Ph.D., M.B.B.S., M.P.H.
Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathology
University of Minnesota Medical School
thya0003@umn.edu

**Research Focus: Role of genetic variants in determining individual susceptibility to cancer and response to treatment after cancer diagnosis**

The BIRCWH program allowed me to refocus my research efforts in the area of breast cancer, an area where my research had not progressed for a couple of years due to insufficient funding. In addition, the BIRCWH award also jump-started my research into the role of mitochondria in cancer etiology, a new area of research for me.

My mentors have provided invaluable advice regarding gathering appropriate types of preliminary data that need to be generated to support a competitive R01 application, and fostering networking with other scientists working on mitochondrial biology to further my research program.

Abbigail Tissot, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Division of Adolescent Medicine, Department of Pediatrics
Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center and University of Cincinnati College of Medicine
abbigail.tissot@cchmc.org

**Research Focus: Anorexia nervosa, restrictive eating disorders, adolescent health, psychobiology, adolescent females, puberty, behavioral endocrinology, development of disordered eating**

There are currently no existing training programs that integrate the psychological and physiological literatures in my research area (eating disorders). As such, the BIRCWH has provided protected research time, mentorship, and career development resources for me to execute a novel training program that applies the neuroendocrine regulation of eating/weight to eating disorders. Without the BIRCWH, I would not have had the ability to develop or execute my training program. With the BIRCWH, I am developing my own research agenda and addressing an issue of critical importance for the health of adolescent and young adult females.

My BIRCWH mentoring team is composed of experts from a broad range of areas. This breadth has been essential for hatching a novel, interdisciplinary model of eating disorders. Specifically, the collective knowledge of my mentors, paired with their individual critiques, has informed and challenged my conceptualization of a transdisciplinary model. Without the broad input of my mentors, my model would be one dimensional and its utility significantly limited. Admittedly, the challenge of developing a new research program is considerable and often daunting. I am fortunate that my mentors are equally as willing to address my career development progress as my research agenda. The BIRCWH’s overarching commitment to both my women’s health-focused agenda and my personal development has proven a unique benefit of this mechanism.
Sarah Tom, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor, Preventive Medicine and Community Health
University of Texas Medical Branch
setom@utmb.edu

Research Focus: Aging, sleep, menopause, mortality
I began my fellowship in October 2010. I am particularly looking forward to the opportunity to extend my research on the health of diverse ethnic and social groups in the United States and abroad.

Betty C. Tong, M.D., M.S., M.H.S.
Assistant Professor, Department of Surgery
Duke University Medical Center
betty.tong@duke.edu

Research Focus: Clinical outcomes for women with lung cancer, specifically pain and quality of life
The BIRCWH program has provided valuable protected research time for me to pursue my academic endeavors, as well as financial resources for my project(s).

Tomoko Udo, Ph.D.
Associate Research Scientist, Department of Psychiatry
Yale University School of Medicine
tomoko.udo@yale.edu

Research Focus: Sex differences, substance use disorders, obesity, eating disorders
The Yale BIRCWH Program has provided me with critical resources and mentoring to facilitate building my own research program, which focuses on the intersection of gender-specific biological mechanisms for obesity and addictive behaviors. I am mentored in and use both human and animal laboratory models to address my research questions, which is made possible with BIRCWH support. The Yale BIRCWH Program also has been instrumental in ensuring that I establish collaborative relationships with senior researchers within and beyond the BIRCWH program. Moreover, with the support of the BIRCWH and my mentors, I have been able to secure external funding to support my work.

Thasarat S. Vajaranant, M.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences
University of Illinois, Chicago
thasarat@uic.edu

Research Focus: Glaucoma, blindness, optic nerve aging, sex differences
The BIRCWH program has given me the opportunity to establish an interdisciplinary
research team investigating women’s eye health. The support and guidance of experienced and knowledgeable mentors has been invaluable. The mentors help to establish research collaboration and network within and outside our institution.

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**Robin C. Vanderpool, Dr.P.H.**  
Assistant Professor, Department of Health Behavior  
University of Kentucky College of Public Health  
robin@kcr.uky.edu

**Research Focus: Cancer prevention and control, cancer disparities, breast cancer, employment disparities**

My research spans the cancer control continuum. With the protected time provided by BIRCWH, I have been able to specifically focus on cancer treatment and survivorship disparities among women working low-wage jobs. With this protected time, I have submitted a 5-year Research Scholar Grant application to the American Cancer Society that has been reviewed favorably, published a narrative review article on this topic, presented at several national conferences, initiated a pilot study at the University of Kentucky Markey Cancer Center Comprehensive Breast Care Center, and collaborated on secondary data analysis of national data focused on this issue.

Through the BIRCWH mentorship, I have gained skills in grant and publication writing, negotiation and time management, and family-work-life balance strategies. I think mentorship in women’s health research is important because it is an area of research that garners national attention (e.g., NIH funding), and the fact that the University of Kentucky is a BIRCWH grantee means that our collective women’s health research is innovative and cutting edge. Additionally, our three program leaders (Drs. Thomas Curry, Ann Coker, and Catherine Martin) bring unique perspectives to women’s health research, spanning basic, clinical, and population science, as well as experience in navigating academia.

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**Lisa VanHoose, Ph.D., PT**  
Assistant Professor, Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science  
University of Kansas Medical Center  
lvanhoose@kumc.edu

**Research Focus: Cancer, health disparities, rehabilitation, genetics, epigenetics**

The BIRCWH program has served as the catalyst for independent research. I am currently in my first year of funding, but the support has allowed me to build my research team and launch two projects.

The opportunity to have senior investigators guide your professional development is invaluable. The pearls of wisdom about grantmanship, networking, manuscript development, and time management are crucial to the young investigator.
Digna R. Velez Edwards, Ph.D., M.S.
Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
Vanderbilt University
digna.r.velez.edwards@vanderbilt.edu

Research Focus: Genetic epidemiology, reproductive epidemiology, genetics, genome, genomics, human genetics, immunology, infectious disease

The BIRCWH program has allowed me the protected time to building my research program, a difficult task with the extensive commitments required of a new assistant professor. This dedicated time has allowed me to focus on women’s health research, a path I intend to make the primary focus on my research. My research is focused on understanding and identifying genetic risk factors for complex diseases with a specific focus on genetic factors related to women’s health and reproductive outcomes. My BIRCWH research is to examine interactions between nonsteroidal-anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) exposure during preconception and early pregnancy and NSAID pathway polymorphisms on risk for spontaneous abortion. These studies will provide the basis to build a research program that is focused on understanding the complex relationship between an individual’s genetic susceptibility and medication exposures during pregnancy on risk for adverse pregnancy outcomes.

The mentoring and mentor panel that is part of the BIRCWH program provide me with guidance and advice regarding my career, research, and funding applications. The mentoring I have received through BIRCWH has helped me greatly through the transition from postdoctoral fellow to assistant professor.

Arpita Kalla Vyas, M.B.Ch.B., FAAP
Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics and Human Development
Michigan State University

Research Focus: Polycystic ovary syndrome, insulin resistance and cardiovascular outcomes

The BIRCWH program has given me a great platform to advance my research interest together with giving me opportunity to collaborate and get mentored by experienced researchers who have focus on women’s health.

The weekly roundtable BIRCWH meeting with other scholars and the BIRCWH principal investigator and research director for the program have been very beneficial in career development. My one-on-one meetings with my mentors have advanced my research skills and helped me refine my troubleshooting skills.

Dinesh Vyas, M.D., M.S., FICS
Assistant Professor, Department of Surgery
Michigan State University
vyasd@msu.edu

Research Focus: Application of multifunctional nanoparticles in triple-negative breast cancer

BIRCWH is a great milestone and will enable me to establish future research in the upcoming area of nanotechnology and women’s health. It will give me an opportunity to learn research grant management and multitasking for my future as a research physician.
I have a great team of mentors from cell biology, animal research, and administrative aspects. I am fortunate that the BIRCWH program lead, Professor Nettleman, guided me at each step to build this team.

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**Hong Wang, Ph.D.**  
Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine  
University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus  
hong.wang@ucdenver.edu  
**Research Focus: Lipid metabolism, obesity, dementia, gender difference**

For the last 5 years, I have been working in the endocrinology division to study lipid metabolism, obesity, and diabetes. As a mother of three children, I have always had a keen interest in all areas of women’s health research. The BIRCWH program gives me the privilege to combine my previous experiences in biochemistry, molecular biology, and cancer cell biology into my current research on obesity and metabolic diseases, as these diseases have such a huge impact particularly on women’s health.

As a junior faculty member, I have been involved in some excellent basic and clinical studies with my mentor, whose expertise in the fields of obesity, diabetes, metabolic disease, and cardiovascular diseases has been of great benefit to my development as a biomedical researcher.

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**Tracey L. Weissgerber, Ph.D.**  
Assistant Professor of Medicine, Division of Nephrology and Hypertension  
Mayo Clinic  
weissgerber.tracey@mayo.edu  
**Research Focus: Preeclampsia, hypertension in pregnancy, pregnancy, exercise, cardiovascular disease, vascular function**

I have used the BIRCWH to expand my research focus to include long-term health outcomes following pregnancies complicated by preeclampsia and other hypertensive pregnancy disorders. I have also developed new skills in epidemiology and statistics. The BIRCWH program has provided a valuable opportunity to establish my independent research career.

Team mentoring at monthly meetings has been very helpful in learning about opportunities that are important for my career, and getting advice on how to advance within the institution. My mentor has also provided advice and support as I take on new research projects.

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**Stephen J. Wilson, Ph.D.**  
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology  
Pennsylvania State University  
sjw42@psu.edu  
**Research Focus: Addictive behavior, cigarette smoking, sex differences**

The BIRCWH program has had a substantial positive impact on the development of my career. In particular, participation in the program has allowed me to expand my
research in exciting and fruitful new directions. In addition, having protected research time and a diverse network of mentors has provided me with an opportunity to learn the skills necessary to excel in this novel line of research.

I have benefited tremendously from the mentoring that I have received through the BIRCWH program in two key ways. First, I have received excellent guidance regarding the conceptual and methodological aspects of the research that I am developing through my participation in the BIRCWH program. This guidance has been critical for maximizing the quality of the science. Second, on a more personal level, I have found great value in mentoring on the “nuts and bolts” of career development, such as tenure and promotion, which has facilitated my development as an independent investigator.

Stacey Winham, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Biostatistics, Department of Health Sciences Research, Division of Biomedical Statistics and Informatics
Mayo Clinic
winham.stacey@mayo.edu

Research Focus: Statistical genetics, gender-specific genetic effects, data-mining methods, psychiatric genetics, ovarian cancer

The BIRCWH program has allowed me to build and expand on my prior research training and has given me the freedom to pursue a new research direction. Additionally, it has provided me with protected time, support, and resources necessary to begin an independent research career.

My individual mentoring team, BIRCWH program mentors, and collaborations with other BIRCWH scholars are critical for my success. Scientific mentoring is essential, but opportunities regarding networking, collaboration, and career advancement are equally valuable.

Barton Wise, M.D., M.Sc.
Assistant Professor, General Internal Medicine
University of California, Davis, Medical Center
barton.wise@ucdmc.ucdavis.edu

Research Focus: Epidemiology of knee and hip osteoarthritis, especially parity and gender and other risk factors for pain, total joint replacement, and radiographic osteoarthritis

The BIRCWH program has given me a series of very special opportunities, and has been essential to supporting my growth as a junior researcher. Besides providing funding that allows me protected time for research, the BIRCWH program at UC Davis has created an environment of fellow junior researchers and mentors who meet frequently for a wide range of activities ranging from journal clubs to “work in progress” meetings to career advisory sessions, all of which promote my success both at the level of improving my work itself as well as positioning me to succeed as my career moves forward. Both the mentors and the scholars have helped to hone my questions and approaches in order to increase the impact and value of my research in the broader community.

My primary mentors play important roles in my career and in my experience of the BIRCWH program. With their much greater experience and wider understanding of how academia operates, they have helped me to direct my research questions as well as my applications for further funding. They have also supported my promotion process and helped me gain access to opportunities for academic growth. They have been excellent collaborators on projects, and encouraged me to present my research to a wide variety of audiences both at UC Davis and outside, which has deepened my understanding of my field and opened me up to many new ideas.
Pingsheng Wu, Ph.D., M.S.
Assistant in Biostatistics, Department of Biostatistics
Vanderbilt University School of Medicine
pingsheng.wu@vanderbilt.edu

Research Focus: Statistical methods for observational studies and causal inference research, health services and outcome research, clinical epidemiology

My career goal is to become an independent investigator as a “translational biostatistician” with my research focus in the development and application of biostatistical methods in clinical and epidemiologic investigations of maternal-child health related diseases. The BIRCWH program provides me with the critical protected time and salary support to extend my work in causal inference in maternal and child asthma studies. The research allows me to master and develop statistical methods that elucidate causal chain relationships among variables. With the BIRCWH award, I have had the opportunity to develop strong preliminary data for a successful NIH RC4 grant application to study statistical methods in comparative effectiveness research using claims data.

I have been fortunate to work with the research group of Tina Hartert, M.D., M.P.H., an internationally known expert in asthma epidemiology. I recognized during my fellowship that my research interest is in the development and appropriate application of quantitative methods to answer interesting clinical questions. Drs. Hartert and William Dupont valued my research interest, and further adapted and expanded my research training to clinical problems, particularly to maternal-child health questions. The most beneficial mentoring I received is the one-to-one weekly meeting I have had with my mentors in the past 6 years. Together we discuss not only specific research questions I encountered, but more importantly, my career growth. With their rigorous mentorship and detailed plan for career development, my training helps me to launch my career as an independent investigator as well as a valued collaborator.

Haitao Yang, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences
University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy
yanght@upmc.edu

Research Focus: Human immunodeficiency virus, pharmacokinetics/pharmacodynamics, drug delivery and targeting, preformulation/formulation

The BIRCWH program has provided me the opportunity to advance my knowledge and skills to achieve independent investigator status. The BIRCWH program has provided not only funds but also the time support to allow me to conduct the pilot research necessary for the advancement of my career. I have gained experience in the microbicide for HIV prevention as well as drug delivery and targeting.

Under the BIRCWH program, I have developed a strong mentoring team that has helped me to successfully design and carry out my research projects. It is a great chance for me to improve my grant writing skills. I have also gained valuable experience from mentors on project development, laboratory management and setup, and collaboration, which has helped me to better navigate my transition to independence.
Elaine W. Yu, M.D., M.M.Sc.
Instructor, Department of Medicine, Endocrine Unit
Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School
ewyu@partners.org

Research Focus: Bone and mineral metabolism, obesity, bariatric surgery, parathyroid hormone, osteoporosis

The BIRCWH program provided protected time for my clinical research in an era of difficult funding. The data I generated with the support of the BIRCWH program provided an important stepping stone for me to successfully obtain my own independent NIH grant. I’ve also expanded my understanding of gender biology and embarked upon novel collaborations with my BIRCWH colleagues.

I greatly appreciate the mentoring I’ve received through the BIRCWH program. One great benefit of this program is the advice received not just from our esteemed BIRCWH program directors, but also from our knowledgeable BIRCWH colleagues.

April M. Zeoli, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Professor, School of Criminal Justice
Michigan State University
zeoli@msu.edu

Research Focus: Intimate partner violence, homicide, child custody, firearms

Being a BIRCWH scholar allowed me to move my research agenda forward much faster than I otherwise would have been able. With my protected time and research budget, I was able conduct a study and involve numerous graduate and undergraduate students as research assistants. I appreciated the opportunity to not only have mentors, but to also be a mentor to the next generation.

The most beneficial aspect of the mentoring I received was assistance in developing a strategy for development and submission of publications and funding applications. My mentors’ experience and knowledge proved instrumental in shaping my funding applications, in particular, and helped me to identify and better focus on issues potentially salient to reviewers.

Qi Zhao, Ph.D.
Research Assistant Professor, Department of Epidemiology
Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine
qizhao@tulane.edu


I am just starting my appointment as a BIRCWH scholar; however, the BIRCWH program will provide me great opportunities and resources to further my research in identifying novel genetic and non-genetic risk factors for hypertension. The BIRCWH program will also facilitate my transition to an independent investigator in
cardiovascular research by improving my skills related to generating novel research ideas, and preparing grant applications.

My interdisciplinary team of mentors is outstanding. They are established investigators of epidemiology, statistical genetics, and basic and clinical medical science. The mentor team will provide me with exceptional guidance, advice and expertise in performing interdisciplinary research and developing my independent research career.

Andrea Zsombok, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Departments of Physiology and Medicine, Endocrinology Section
Tulane University School of Medicine
azsombo@tulane.edu

Research Focus: Neuroscience, neurophysiology, diabetes, TRP receptors

The BIRCWH award gives me protected time, and therefore helps me focus on my career development. I have more interaction with investigators outside of my field, manage scientific problems, challenge paradigms, and find solutions. The interdisciplinary environment teaches me how to integrate diverse sources of information and develop ideas to integrate multidisciplinary research fields, thus leading to the development of novel ideas.

My mentors are from different fields with unique expertise (cardiovascular, diabetes, neuroscience). This combination is particularly useful for my scientific development and for the approaches that I currently use in my research. Moreover, they can critically evaluate my research ideas and methods from different points of view, which particularly helps my interdisciplinary research development.