

May 21, 2021

Hi Everyone!

This week's Departmental Acknowledgment goes to a remarkable trio of Departmental clinician-investigators who successfully secured a FRQ-S Senior Chercheur Boursier Clinicien Award in the latest funding round; **Genevieve Bernard, Maryam Oskoui and Pia Wintermark**. This particular award is an important one as it clears the path for these individuals to tenure and professorial consideration, as well as securing enduring hors-PEM status once the Senior award expires.

Genevieve is a pediatric neurologist who has migrated to genetics, specifically exploring the basis of a complex group of disorders known as leukodystrophies. These disorders involve a myriad of genetically programmed defects in the formation and maintenance of myelin. Clinical presentation and radiologic findings are complex and Genevieve has done much to bring order and understanding to this field. She has also turned her investigative lens on outcomes and improving care in these frequently progressive and degenerative disorders. I have no doubt that her work will pave the way for interventions such as gene therapy that offers the promise of radical benefits for these children and their families. Of note Genevieve was the Faculty's Maude Abbott recipient last year for her research excellence.



Maryam is also a pediatric neurologist who is among the few who are also qualified as an epidemiologist. Maryam's research focus has been on neuromuscular disorders; one mediated centrally (cerebral palsy [CP]) and the other peripherally (spinal muscular atrophy [SMA]). Maryam has done much to flesh out the richness of the causal mechanisms and determinants underlying CP and its phenotypic variability, including genetic mechanisms. She has also done cutting edge work refining our understanding of the natural history of SMA and she had led the charge in advancing gene therapy for this disorder from the research to clinical context. What has occurred is truly a revolution that has transformed a uniformly fatal disease to one that is chronic with the new promise of good outcomes for affected children. Maryam has also extended her reach as a consulting methodologist and evaluator for practice guidelines, clinical trials, and the approval of new interventions. She has also ventured into administration and since last Spring has been our youngest Division Director (and my professional boss).



Pia a neonatologist, while not formally a neurologist, has focused her career on neonatal neuroscience. Pia's NeoBrainLab focuses on the newborn brain and seeks to identify causal mechanisms of acquired brain injury, in particular birth asphyxia, that lead to therapeutic interventions to prevent injury or improve outcomes. Pia has developed a multi-modal approach that includes basic, imaging, and clinical modalities that enables cross-referencing and synergy. She has leveraged well, collaborating with investigators from a variety of disciplines. Her work has been internally recognized at McGill by her

being recently named a William Dawson Scholar. She has also been active as a research mentor to pediatric trainees.

I take a particular joy in the success of each of these individuals. I had the privilege of training as a pediatric neurologist Genevieve and Maryam and recruiting them to the Department. While I cannot take credit for training or recruiting Pia, I committed fully to supporting her research efforts at every opportunity that I was given during my mandate. It's a delight to see all three of these individuals thriving.

In essence, this is what leaders leave as their legacy.

Have a great weekend everyone!

Michael

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