

June 10th, 2022

To all the members of the Department of Pediatrics on behalf of the Chair/Chief, Dr. Beth Foster

The announcement of the recipients of FRQS Chercheur-Boursier Clinicien awards was delayed this year by almost 6 weeks, but it was definitely worth the wait. These awards are critical to the research careers of the individuals receiving them and to the academic health of the Department. Recipients of these awards go 'hors PEM', allowing new recruitment to our department. They are also supported financially by the RAMQ under the 'remuneration recherche' program. The investment we make in these individuals for a short time at the beginning of their careers—usually 1-2 years – pays off when they succeed in these competitions. These awards have 3 levels, each lasting 4 years: Junior 1 for new investigators, Junior 2 for early-mid career, and Senior.

Crafting a successful FRQS Junior 1 application takes months of work. The applicant must present a credible, innovative, and well-justified 4-year program of research. They must also highlight their past accomplishments and demonstrate to a discerning review panel that they have exceptional potential to be successful in the cut-throat world of research.

This year, two of our newest investigators, Dr. Angeliki Makri (Endocrinology), and Dr. Laurence Chapuy (Gastroenterology) received Junior 1 awards.

Despite being on maternity leave, Angeliki seized the opportunity when a special funding opportunity became available (FRQS Junior 1 in Artificial Intelligence and Digital Health). Balancing her responsibilities as a new mother with her scientific drive, she put together a program entitled, "Using machine learning in pediatric diabetes to improve diagnosis and clinical outcomes". Angeliki recently presented her exciting research plans at the Child Health and Human Development Seminar series.

Laurence has worked extremely hard since starting at the MCH in Oct. 2020 to develop her research program. It is wonderful to count another fundamental scientist amongst our clinician-scientists; they are becoming an endangered species! Laurence's program, entitled « Plasticité des monocytes humains vers des macrophages réparateurs in vivo et in vitro dans les maladies inflammatoires intestinales » will enhance our understanding of inflammatory bowel disease, hopefully leading to novel therapies.

Being awarded an FRQS Senior award is a key milestone in the trajectory of a clinician-scientist. Following completion of this 4-year award, the clinician-scientist who remains successful in research is designated as a "Chercheur Chevronné" and remains hors PEM. They also qualify for McGill's tenure-track for clinician-scientists program, whereupon they begin to receive salary support from the university (with a mandatory contribution from the MSSA). Success at the FRQS Senior level requires evidence of a very high level of research in the prior 8 years. These individuals have been funded externally by CIHR and other agencies. They have demonstrated productivity by publishing their work in high quality journals and presenting at meetings. They have shown themselves to be outstanding educators, training and supervising graduate students, residents, post-doctoral fellows, and medical students in research -- a very time-consuming, but rewarding undertaking. They must also demonstrate their 'rayonnement'—their national and international reputation as experts in their fields – which is evidenced by leadership on major multicenter research initiatives, invited talks at conferences, participation on grants review panels and on editorial boards of journals. All scientists submit many more grants than they get. Success rates range

from 15-25% for most external competitions. Individuals who succeed at the Senior level have usually submitted multiple grant applications each year—each of which takes months of work.

This year ALL 3 of our clinician-scientists who applied at the Senior level were successful. Dr. Moshe Ben-Shoshan (Allergy-Immunology), Dr. Patricia Fontela (Pediatric Critical Care), and Dr. Meranda Nakhla (Endocrinology)

Moshe, described by his division director as “the Energizer bunny of research”, will continue his impactful work on food allergies in children with a program entitled “Allergies aux aliments et aux médicaments: anaphylaxie, taux, causes, gestion et désensibilisation”. Keep watching and listening to the news; you are bound to hear more about his discoveries and innovations.

Patricia’s impressive funding success was recently highlighted in a DA. It is perhaps even more impressive to note that none of this most recent funding success even counted when her application for the FRQS Senior award was reviewed; it came too late. Kudos to Patricia for being relentless! Her program, entitled, « Patients atteints d’infections sévères admis aux soins intensifs : vers une prise en charge optimale fondée sur des données probantes » will lead to improved care for children with severe infections in the PICU.

Meranda has built a very successful and well-funded research program very much inspired by the challenges she has encountered caring for adolescents with diabetes. Her program, « Améliorer les soins de santé et les résultats des enfants et des adolescents atteints de diabète, du diagnostic à la transition vers les soins aux adultes » promises to lead to better outcomes for children and youth with diabetes across their lifespans.

All of the award recipients benefited from the support and mentorship of more senior scientists. Thanks go to Dr. Constantin Polychronakos, Dr. Nada Jabado, Dr. Christine McCusker, Dr. Bruce Mazer, Dr. Sam Shemie, Dr. Indra Gupta, and Dr. Kaberi Dasgupta for their unwavering support and constructive criticism. Congratulations to all the FRQS awardees!!

Have a great weekend.

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