Medical Dermatology Society Mentorship Summary Report

In the summer of 2018, I started my mentorship through MDS with Dr. Carrie Kovarik at the University of Pennsylvania. The mentorship is ongoing, and has been focused on four specific goals.

1) Dr. Kovarik has provided valuable feedback regarding a research project I undertook during an elective month during which I traveled to Ghana. This project focused on measuring the disability associated with skin problems in rural communities of Ghana. Before, during, and after the trip I consulted Dr. Kovarik on her advice on how best to complete my research goals. The project was a success in that I gathered high-quality data from over 300 participants in 7 rural communities around Kumasi, Ghana. Her input about the structure of my project and manuscript has been essential in making my study unique in the medical literature.

2) While in Philadelphia, I worked with Dr. Kovarik in clinic and behind the microscope. Her clinic is unique in that she sees patients with complicated infectious and medical disease. I discovered new approaches to treatment of common things, like HPV warts, and saw diagnoses that I have never seen before, like disseminated superficial actinic porokeratosis. From a dermatopathology perspective, her teaching was valuable in my goal of developing a solid foundation for clinicopathologic correlation in my approach to dermatology.

3) During my time at UPenn, I embarked on a research project that Dr. Kovarik had completed an IRB for, but had not yet started. This project focused on the validation of a smartphone camera adapter tool to take pictures of teledermatopathology samples. I took digital images of over 50 cases, which were sent to participating dermatopathologists around the country. These physicians will also receive the physical glass slides of the same cases after a wash-out period so that we can compare the effectiveness of making diagnoses using the digital images. This tool could potential transform teledermatopathology in developing countries, as well offering a convenient alternative for all dermatologists and pathologists interested in capturing images of the slides they’re examining. This exercise was helpful for me in that it was a focused study of specific inflammatory dermatoses and their associated pathology, and I will benefit from completing a publishable research project.

4) After my time at UPenn, I was invited to participate in a second manuscript with Dr. Kovarik regarding the use of teledermatology as a research tool. This manuscript is underway, and I’ve developed a more nuanced understanding of this technology and its wide array of applications for clinical and research purposes.

The mentorship through MDS was a highly valuable experience, and I am grateful for the ongoing mentorship with Dr. Kovarik that started with the MDS.

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