Finding the Right Lab and the Right Mentor

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Disclosures

• No financial disclosures

• I disclose that the details of this talk are purely my own opinion

• Much of this will vary based on ones own personality, goals, aspirations etc.
Choosing the right lab

• What do you want to be when you grow up!
  • Clinician
  • Clinician-scientist
    • Basic
    • Translational
    • Outcomes/Health Policy
  • Scientist
Choosing the right lab

• Most important decision… What do you want to study?
  • Continuation of prior lab work
  • New hot area of research
  • Something that aligns with clinical interest
  • Institutional/departmental strength
Choosing the right lab

- The decision on what lab to join should parallel the thoughts of what job to take

**Job qualities**
- Has what I want clinically
- Track record for success
- Good partners
- Proven mentors

**Lab qualities**
- Has what I want scientifically
- Track record for success
- Good collaborators
- Proven mentors

Will the job let me be a great scientist?
Will the lab let me be a great surgeon?
When to start looking for the right lab

• Should coincide with looking for a job

• Ideally can have a rough idea of the landscape prior to first interview

• Must meet with potential mentors for second interview
Go it alone or join a group
Deciding what lab is right for you...

• Access to good mentorship
• Access to collaborators
• Funding and source of funding
• Track record of prior junior lab members
• Size and Location
Deciding what lab is right for you...

Physician Scientist
- Been there
- Knows the balance
- Access to different funding streams

Research Scientist
- Available
- Often better funded
- More options
Deciding which mentor is right for you...
Deciding which mentor is right for you...

**Assistant**
- **Pro**
  - Very available
  - In touch
  - Eager
- **Con**
  - May fail
  - Inexperienced
  - Will hurt CDA chances

**Associate**
- **Pro**
  - Available
  - Collaborative
  - Established
- **Con**
  - May leave
  - Small lab
  - May hurt CDA chances

**Professor**
- **Pro**
  - Well established
  - Connected
  - Well funded
  - Will help CDA
- **Con**
  - Busy
  - May retire
  - Often many trainees/mentees
Perception.....
Reality.....

Mentorship by committee...
My mentor “committee”....

Big picture mentors

“Primary” mentor

ME

“Daily” mentor

Grant guru mentor

Clinical mentors

Psychological mentor
Summary

• Choosing a lab and mentor is one of the most important decisions in your career

• The choice should parallel the selection of your first job

• Decision should be made to go alone or join a big lab

• Pick a mentor who can provide guidance and is available