

ASPHO Career Path Spotlight

Prerna Kumar, MD

Career Description

1. **Current position:** Assistant Professor of Clinical Pediatrics
2. **Institution:** University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria
3. **Years at institution:** 3.5
4. **Did you complete additional post-fellowship training? Was it an important factor in your current position?** I did not complete post-fellowship training.
5. **Years out of Fellowship:** 3.5
6. **Type of institution: (Academic center, clinical center, private practice, Research facility, Industry, Non-profit)** Academic center
7. **Approximate number of attendings in your PHO department/division:** 8 (2 are primarily non-clinical with a focus on administration and/or research)
8. **How do you allocate your effort? (*Please provide a % for each area)**
60% Clinical, 15% Scholarship, 10% Education, 15% Administration, 0% Other
9. **Position Specifics (Please give a brief description of your current responsibilities in these areas)**
 - a. **Clinical activity:** As an outpatient pediatric sub-specialist, I see established patients and new consults in clinic 2-3 full days per week. These patients include active oncology patients on therapy, patients with hematology diagnoses such as iron deficiency anemia and ITP, as well as patients with vascular/lymphatic malformations and cancer predisposition syndromes. I perform procedures (lumbar punctures with intrathecal chemotherapy, bone marrow aspirates and biopsies) in the outpatient and inpatient settings, with the help of our pediatric sedation or pediatric anesthesia teams. I also provide coverage as the inpatient attending on our dedicated pediatric hematology/oncology inpatient unit. We are on service for typically one week at a time, on average every 5-6 weeks, approximately 9 times a year. We care for patients admitted to our service, co-manage our patients admitted to the PICU, and provide consultation services to other pediatric patients admitted to the hospital.
 - b. **Scholarship/Research:** Through a competitive application process, I was selected to participate in the Caterpillar Faculty Scholars Fellowship from September 2020-December 2021 where I engaged in a 16-month long faculty development program focused on research, teaching, leadership, and education. The topic of my capstone research project for this fellowship was Peripheral Neuropathy in Pediatric Oncology Patients Receiving Levaquin and Vincristine Compared to Vincristine Alone. I plan to present this work at PAS and ASPHO this spring. I am a co-investigator on a project that received grant funding to investigate epigenetic age in childhood cancer survivors. The manuscript for this project is under review. I am working with a core group of dedicated colleagues to build and develop our Adolescent and Young Adult Oncology Program while studying the potential psychosocial benefits of this program for our patients. As a



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COG member, I am involved in a research project evaluating the late neurocognitive outcomes of patients with neuroblastoma associated opsoclonus-myoclonus-ataxia syndrome treated with or without IVIG in addition to prednisone and risk adapted chemotherapy.

- c. **Education/Teaching:** Working at an academic center with a medical school and residency, I am involved in medical education and have mentored medical students and residents on research projects and quality improvement projects, several of which have led to abstracts presented at conferences and a publication. I conduct teaching sessions both in the outpatient and inpatient setting in addition to bedside teaching, formal lectures including morning report and noon conference, and procedural education and supervision.
- d. **Administration:** As the clinic director for our division, I work with nursing leadership, and hospital administration to improve the patient experience and quality of care. I participate in solving practical and logistical problems related to provider workflow, patient satisfaction, safety, systems-related issues. Recent projects include the implementation of After Visit Summaries, outlining a new process for medication refills, creation of COVID testing and isolation algorithms, tracking new referrals, standardizing follow up letters to referring providers, and promoting a positive workplace environment and collaborative culture with commitment to co-workers.
- e. **Other:** I serve on the Pediatric Peer Review Committee to review cases and evaluate areas for improvement and the Residency Clinical Competency Curriculum Committee. I am part of our division's Beacon (EPIC's oncology module) validation team and serve as a liaison to troubleshoot and improve the chemotherapy ordering and monitoring process.

Career Perspectives

1. **What were important factors in your taking on this role (e.g., professional interest, family, geography, spousal profession)? What made this career path appealing?** Pediatric Hematology/Oncology was always appealing to me because it is the perfect mix of acuity and continuity of care with hands-on procedures. It requires a multi-organ system perspective and fosters long-term relationships with patients and families. My current position has been a wonderful opportunity to begin my post-fellowship career at a midsize academic center. It has allowed me to grow professionally and provides the right balance of clinical care responsibilities and participation in education and scholarly work.
2. **Is there specific training or experience that helped you obtain this position?** My prior training at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine for medical school, University of Colorado Children's Hospital Colorado for pediatrics residency, and UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital for hematology/oncology fellowship were all phenomenal experiences which truly shaped me into the physician I am today. I am also eternally grateful for the personal support I have always received from my husband, parents, and twin sister, as they give me perspective, drive, and motivation whenever I need it most!

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3. **Is this career path what you expected? Please explain.** Being at an academic center was always the career path that I was looking for post-fellowship, given my interest in clinical research and medical education.
4. **What do you find most rewarding about your current professional role?** It is rewarding to be able to make a difference in the lives of patients daily and also have positive experiences with not only patients but also trainees and colleagues.
5. **What do you find most challenging about your current professional role?** One of the most challenging things for me is the intensity of our patient relationships and the unpredictable nature of disease courses. Whether it is making decisions about the next steps in treatment or participating in end-of-life care, this can be demanding on one's time and attention, especially while balancing a multitude of other professional responsibilities and attempting to maintain work-life balance.
6. **What do you see yourself doing in 5 years and 10 years?** As a young faculty member early in my career, I hope to have built a clinical niche in my field in 5-10 years. I would like to continue my clinical and scholarly work at an academic center with additional professional development in education, leadership, and administration. I hope to have the same passion for medicine after 5-10 years, despite the challenges of the ever-changing climate of healthcare for physicians.