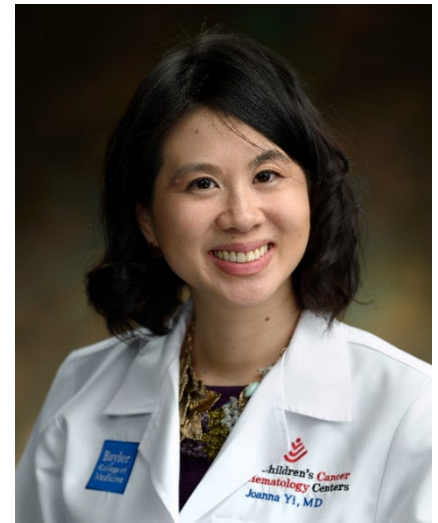


ASPHO Career Path Spotlight

Joanna S. Yi, MD

Career Description

1. **Current position:** Assistant Professor
2. **Institution:** Texas Children's Hospital/Baylor College of Medicine
3. **Years at institution:** 7
4. **Did you complete additional post-fellowship training? Was it an important factor in your current position?** Yes, the 2 extra years I spent as an instructor completing my post-doc work was important to gain more lab techniques/experience in drug combinations.
5. **Years out of Fellowship:** 9
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:** ~65
8. **How do you allocate your effort? (*Please provide a % for each area)**
Clinical 80%, Scholarship 20%
9. **Position Specifics (Please give a brief description of your current responsibilities in these areas)**
 - a. **Clinical activity:** as part of the Leukemia Team and Phase 1 /Developmental Therapeutics Team at Texas Children's Hospital, I have 2 leukemia clinics/week, ~2 phase 1 clinics/month, and attend on service ~6 weeks/year. I have multiple primary patients and oversee continuity fellows in clinic as well as work with the PNP's.
 - b. **Scholarship/Research:** the Yi lab is seeking to find new targeted drugs for pediatric cancers, with a special interest in using epigenetics to find new targets (& the drugs that modulate them) for pediatric AML. Concurrently I am developing several phase 1 trials of epigenetic drugs and involved in several COG ALL subcommittees
 - c. **Education/Teaching:** I am involved in the fellowship education committee at Texas Children's Hospital, and also give 2 annual lectures to the fellows. I also give ad hoc lectures to the continuity fellows on my clinic days.
 - d. **Administration:** I serve as a member of the Pediatric Review and Monitoring committee that reviews new protocols coming through the Hematology and/or Oncology clinics of Texas Children's Hospital.
 - e. **Other:** N/A



ASPHO Career Path Spotlight

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?

There were multiple factors, primarily professional interest and family. During my fellowship, my parents had moved to Dallas, TX and I felt the call to live close to them. When I was looking for jobs, Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) was growing their Center for Drug Discovery and was looking for a liaison with Texas Children's Hospital (TCH; the pediatric teaching hospital of BCM), and specifically the Texas Children's Cancer and Hematology Centers (TXCH). TXCH has an extensive Phase 1/Developmental Therapeutics program that I wanted to participate in and learn from. Also, TXCH had just been designated a Center of Excellence in Developmental Therapeutics by Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation and had funding for Scholars in Developmental Therapeutics (so I was awarded one of the slots). TXCH is extremely involved in COG, of which I wanted to get more involved. Lastly, I had met some of the BCM basic science faculty and looked forwards to also collaborating with them around leukemia and epigenetics. Overall, BCM/TXCH was an ideal next step after completing my fellowship/postdoc and getting me into the career of bringing new lab innovations to patients, especially targeted drugs.

2. Is there specific training or experience that helped you obtain this position?

The lab I did my postdoc in was focused on leukemia, epigenetics, and drug discovery. My PI had spun off multiple startups and was very committed to translating his research findings to the clinic, setting an incredible example for me to emulate. The skills I gained there in how to characterize new drugs, dig into mechanism, design biomarker assays, and find synergistic drug combos were critical to help me launch my career in pediatric oncology drug discovery and to obtain my assistant professor position at TXCH.

3. Is this career path what you expected? Please explain.

Pretty much yes, as this is my dream job! That I can care for children with cancer and be part of an incredible cancer center is a privilege. Then absolute cherry-on-top that I get to work in phase 1 trials and see exciting laboratory findings make it to the clinic in first-in-children trials and beyond. I'm especially excited that two of the trials I've been working on are now open (both epigenetic agents)! I have so many amazing collaborators both in the lab and in the clinic, locally, and really internationally, to help me achieve these goals. And I've met and benefitted from so many amazing mentors along the way who have taken the time to invest in me.

ASPHO Career Path Spotlight

4. What do you find most rewarding about your current professional role?

I think my answer to #3 already said it. 😊 Caring for our adorable patients is truly a joy—Teaming up with the parents (experts in their child!), we can combine our strengths to give their child the best possible outcome! Then my passion has always been to find new drugs--that I have the privilege of designing trials of new targeted agents and overseeing/reporting their outcomes to advance science for my patients is incredible! Lastly, I love my colleagues and collaborators! So many smart, dedicated, nice scientists eager to make a difference for our patients!

5. What do you find most challenging about your current professional role?

Still too slow to open new phase 1 pediatric trials—so many hurdles to overcome/people to get onto the same page. It can be VERY disappointing sometimes. But drug discovery a high-risk (but also hopefully high-reward) area, so I've just continued to persevere and leverage my resources/network to keep pushing. And always so frustrating/sad whenever I have nothing left to offer a patient with aggressive disease. We need to be doing better ASAP for all our patients.

6. What do you see yourself doing in 5 years and 10 years?

Hopefully more of the same, bringing more new targeted agents to start transforming the current therapies for children with cancer. And since pediatric cancers can have overlapping drivers, I hope to be extending my initial trials to other relevant cancers. Also designing more novel combination trials!