

ASPHO Career Path Spotlight

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Career Description

1. **Current position:** Co-Director, The Cure Starts Now Brain Tumor Center; Director, Neurofibromatosis Clinic; Professor of Pediatrics
2. **Institution:** Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
3. **Years at institution:** 8
4. **Did you complete additional post-fellowship training? Was it an important factor in your current position?** Yes. I completed additional training in Pediatric Neuro-Oncology after my fellowship, which has been essential to my current role as a pediatric neuro-oncologist.
5. **Years out of Fellowship:** 13
6. **Type of institution:** Academic center
7. **Approximate number of attendings in your PHO department/division:** 60
8. **How do you allocate your effort? (*Please provide a % for each area)**
60% Clinical, 20% Scholarship, 10% Education, 10% Administration
9. **Position Specifics (Please give a brief description of your current responsibilities in these areas)**
 - a. **Clinical activity**—My clinical work focuses on pediatric brain tumors and children with NF1, NF2 and schwannomatosis. I help lead both the Brain Tumor Center and the NF Clinic, shaping their clinical and research missions through program development, faculty and staff recruitment, education, and outreach. Although I care for a wide range of pediatric brain tumors and NF-associated conditions, my primary focus is low grade gliomas and NF-associated tumors.
 - b. **Scholarship/Research**—My research integrates training in epidemiology and biostatistics, advanced MRI techniques, and clinical neuro-oncology to improve outcomes for children with brain tumors. I focus on functional outcomes (vision, hearing, motor function) and quality of life in children with low-grade gliomas and/or NF1. I've helped develop non-invasive radiographic biomarkers for vision loss in children with optic pathway gliomas and serve as study chair for ACNS1833, which evaluates both radiographic and functional outcomes in glioma therapy. I also serve as Vice Chair of the Neurofibromatosis Clinical Trials Consortium.
 - c. **Education/Teaching**—I teach medical students, residents and fellows in clinic and while on inpatient service. I also mentor junior faculty in launching and sustaining their research careers and clinical interests.

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- d. **Administration**—As Co-Director of the Brain Tumor Center and Director of the NF Clinic, I oversee multidisciplinary program development, lead tumor boards, and coordinate care strategies for complex cases. I focus on integration of research, clinical excellence, and outreach in both programs.

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?**
During my NeuroOnc fellowship, I got interested in whether an MRI technique that mapped white matter connections (Diffusion Tensor Imaging) could predict vision problems in young children with optic pathway gliomas. This project sparked a broader clinical interest in children with NF1 (who frequently have optic pathway glioma) and a research focus on incorporating functional outcomes (like vision) in how we measure the efficacy of a treatment. As I gained experience in both areas, I started to develop expertise in both low grade glioma and NF1. Leading the programs in brain tumors and NF wasn't a role that I went looking for, but it has been extremely fulfilling.
2. **Is there specific training or experience that helped you obtain this position?**
Completing an additional year of fellowship training Neuro-Oncology has been foundational to my career in pediatric brain tumors. I also completed a Master's in Epidemiology and Biostatistics, which helped give me the tools to lead clinical trials. Early in my NF research, I received a Collins Scholar Award from NTAP, which provided valuable mentorship and career development opportunities in NF.
3. **Is this career path what you expected? Please explain.**
When I finished my fellowship, I hoped that I would someday lead a program. When the opportunity arose, I didn't feel ready. Learning to lead has been one of the most rewarding and eye-opening aspects of my career. I enjoy helping programs and people grow into their full potential.
4. **What do you find most rewarding about your current professional role?**
I love to learn what excites and motivates others and helping turn those passions into reality. Supporting people as they figure out how they want to change the world is one of the best parts of my job.
5. **What do you find most challenging about your current professional role?**
This work can be emotionally draining. Supporting children and their families through a cancer diagnosis—especially when the prognosis is poor—is both the most rewarding and the most difficult part of the job.
6. **What do you see yourself doing in 5 years and 10 years?**
Hopefully continuing the same work. I truly enjoy what I do and am excited to see how the programs and people I work with continue to grow in the years ahead!