ASPHO Career Path Spotlight



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Career Description

1. **Current position:** Pediatric Hematologist; Clinical Director of Medical Education
2. **Institution:** Innovative Hematology and the Indiana Hemophilia & Thrombosis Center (IHTC)
3. **Years at institution:** 4
4. **Did you complete additional post-fellowship training? Was it an important factor in your current position?** I completed a master's degree in medical education during fellowship, and it has been an important factor in my current position.
5. **Years out of Fellowship:** 4
6. **Type of institution:** My institution's structure is an uncommon one in pediatric hematology. Rather than being embedded in an academic medical center, it's a non-profit organization that is home to an independent, federally recognized Hemophilia Treatment Center (HTC) with privileges at an adjacent academic hospital. It's also the only HTC in the state.
7. **Approximate number of attendings in your PHO department/division:** 9 pediatric hematologists and 9 adult hematologists
8. **How do you allocate your effort?** 70% clinical, 28% Med Ed + Research, 2% Administration
9. **Position Specifics**
    a. ***Clinical activity:*** My clinical focus is hemoglobinopathies, particularly sickle cell disease. My duties include two days of clinic per week, monthly outreach clinics, inpatient service coverage 6-7 weeks per year, and "doc of the day" assignments in addition to intermittent night/weekend on-call responsibilities.
    b. ***Scholarship/Research:*** My primary scholarly focus is medical education, with institutional support for this work. I have participated in several Med Ed projects at Innovative Hematology, with my primary focus being the Partners Physician Academy, an annual week-long educational program for fellows and early-career physicians focused on bleeding disorders. I serve on the planning committee overseeing curriculum development and learner assessment and as an ad hoc member of the board of directors. I am the principal investigator for a study evaluating the program's effectiveness and impact. I also serve as an institutional sub-investigator for two sickle cell database studies and collaborate with others on smaller projects, like retrospective chart reviews and case series publications.
    c. ***Education/Teaching***: In addition to my involvement with the Partners Physician Academy, I serve as clerkship director and co-preceptor for the resident and medical student pediatric hematology rotations. I am core faculty on the Pediatric Residency

Clinical Competency Committee and Program Evaluation Committee at Peyton Manning Children's Hospital. I also serve as a resident advisor and participate in the medical student mentoring program. I contribute to the design of the hematology components of the resident didactic curriculum, including delivering some of the lectures myself. I also teach at various community hospitals regarding the care of children with sickle cell disease and assist with other educational efforts within our institution.

d. ***Administration***: In addition to the administrative aspects of the positions described above, I also put my old chief resident skills to use creating and coordinating the clinical assignment / call schedule for our physician group. I also serve on the Pediatric Process Improvement & Patient Safety Committee.

e. ***Other:*** Outside of my official role at Innovative Hematology, I am the hemoglobinopathies section leader for a national PHO fellowship curriculum working group. I'm also part of the National Alliance of Sickle Cell Centers' "reticulocyte committee," which aims to develop educational experiences for trainees interested in sickle cell disease. I have also participated in ACGME working groups focused on milestone and EPA development and have collaborated with other Med Ed researchers on multi-institution projects. I am also an Assistant Clinical Professor of Pediatrics at Marian University College of Osteopathic Medicine.

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?**
   I chose Med Ed because I find it interesting and the impact is meaningful. In other words, I love learning about learning, and I think that better medical education improves the lives of physicians and their patients. My specific role at Innovative Hematology is unique in the level of institutional support I receive to do the work I do and the freedom I was given to develop the role into what it is now, so I jumped at the chance to take my current position.

2. **Is there specific training or experience that helped you obtain this position?**
   I don't know if they necessarily helped me obtain my position, but earning a master's degree in medical education certainly helped me develop the skills I needed to be successful in my position. The connections I made through the ASH Medical Educators Institute (MEI) and the ASPHO Early Career Mentoring Program were also invaluable in getting me to the place I am today.

3. **Is this career path what you expected? Please explain.**
   I developed an interest in the Med Ed field early on in my training. By the time I entered fellowship, I knew I wanted to intentionally make Med Ed a part of my career. Before I fully understood the scope of the Med Ed field, I assumed that the most viable career path for me would be to become a fellowship / residency program director or a DIO. So in that sense, no, my current position is not what I expected for myself. I am happy with my career path so far,

though. I've had opportunities in my current role that I didn't think would be possible this early in my career.

4. **What do you find most rewarding about your current professional role?**
I find the work itself fascinating, so the opportunity to satisfy my own intellectual curiosity is deeply rewarding. I also enjoy seeing the tangible impact of that work at different levels—from developing better ways to assess learning to seeing meaningful, evidence-based changes to a curriculum, or experiencing the "lightbulb moment" when a learner grasps a new concept. Introducing others to the breadth and depth of the medical education field is also rewarding. There is often a misconception that medical education is primarily "just teaching" so I enjoy helping my colleagues appreciate the rigor, scholarship, and research that underpin the field.

5. **What do you find most challenging about your current professional role?**
One of the greatest challenges is ensuring that we are all "speaking the same language". Because medical education encompasses much more than teaching, there is often a need for ongoing level-setting about what the field entails, as well as the goals, methods, and outcomes of educational work. Without that shared understanding, the value or intended impact of educational initiatives and scholarship can sometimes be misunderstood or overlooked.

   Another challenge for the field in general is the relative lack of dedicated funding and resources for medical education initiatives and research. At many academic institutions, individuals who pursue medical education scholarship are expected to incorporate that work into another FTE-aligned role—such as an associate program director or clerkship director—or secure external funding to support their dedicated effort. This can make it difficult to develop a sustained research program in medical education. I am very fortunate that I don't personally have to contend with this issue at my current institution, but I know my situation is uncommon. My dedicated time is covered by my institution, so I would only need to secure outside funding if the project incurred additional costs.

   As a fellow, my biggest challenge was finding mentorship and guidance. Most of the people I encountered who were in the Med Ed field didn't initially plan to end up in those roles, so they couldn't advise me on how to intentionally pursue this. Both my research interest in medical education and my clinical interest in sickle cell disease have historically been less commonly chosen as intentional areas of focus, so it was difficult to identify mentors who could help me understand not only how to conduct the Med Ed work, but also how to navigate the broader academic and career-development aspects of building a niche in these fields.

6. **What do you see yourself doing in 5 years and 10 years?**
I will still be taking care of children with sickle cell disease and involved in medical education in some way. I hope to continue to build the medical education programs at Innovative

Hematology and take on more medical education-related leadership positions within national organizations.