

Hi Everyone

Researchers are like the folks who work in call centres. They get use to rejection yet despite the frequency of being refused a grant application or a paper submission, they soldier on confident that their luck will change the very next go around. Indeed a Chair I served under presciently told me early in my career that a scientist is someone who is resubmitting for the fifth time a paper or a grant.

The current research funding environment is quite simply brutal. Grant application success at the CIHR, our national health research funding agency, has hovered at 16-18% for a few years now. That is why this week's Departmental Acknowledgement goes to Genevieve Bernard, Nancy Braverman, Indra Gupta and Nada Jabado for their recent success as Principal Investigators on the CIHR's most recent operational grant competition. For some this was their first kick at the can, for some its yet another feather in a crowded cap, and for some it was the product of dogged persistence and their belief in having something to add.

Genevieve is a former trainee of mine in pediatric neurology who is very quickly establishing herself as a national, and dare I say international, authority in the leukodystrophies. Already a Chercheur-Boursier Clinicien she has secured a grant that will enable her to further delineate the phenotypic and genotypic spectrum of the leukodystrophies. With roughly 40% of these disorders now of "unknown" cause she has much work to be done and no doubt future grant applications to make.

Nancy, a biochemical geneticist has distinguished herself as an international authority on disorders of peroxisomal biogenesis. Her CIHR grant application is designed to utilize animal models to identify novel molecules for therapeutic intervention in these rare disorders and expedite their application to affected patients. The work in this grant truly is an example of an innovative bedside-bench-bedside approach to scientific discovery.

Indra, a pediatric nephrologist, in her successful grant application had applied advanced molecular genetic techniques and adapted mouse models to further our understanding of a common problem in pediatrics; urinary tract infections and their relationship to vesico-ureteric reflux. Indra's work will further our understanding of the pathogenesis of this disorder. It might also answer the critical question of why some children are afflicted by this disorder which can result in irreparable kidney damage.

Nada, a hematologist-oncologist with a focus on brain tumours, has leveraged her involvement in an international collaborative network to investigate the genome, epigenome and transcriptome of an extensive collection of astrocytoma tumor specimens to hopefully identify future therapeutic targets for our interventional efforts. This gives hope where at present little hope exists unfortunately. Nada has enjoyed a quite remarkable recent run of scientific and personal success. What is re-