

Founders' Medal Award Acceptance

Monica M. Farley, MD

Thank you to David Guidot for that kind and flattering presentation. Thank you to Mike Bronze for nominating me for this award, to Joan Kemp for keeping us all in line through the years and thanks to all of you who are keeping this multidisciplinary meeting alive and well.

Thirty years ago this month, I presented my 1st scientific abstract at the Southern Societies Meeting here in New Orleans. I was a nervous 2nd-year ID fellow. The abstract that had been typed on a typewriter and literally cut and pasted into the abstract box was titled "Interactions of *Haemophilus influenzae* with Human Nasopharyngeal Mucosa: Role of Igal Protease." I stumbled over several lines in my scripted 10-minute presentation, but I hit my stride in the question answer session, feeling honored to field questions from important ID leaders from the region. I could see my future unfolding before me in academic medicine. Eight years later, I joined the Council of the Southern Section of the American Federation for Medical Research (AFMR, although it was then still the American Federation for Clinical Research [AFCR]), one of several organizations that partner to sponsor the Southern Societies Meeting.

The national AFMR organization is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. It is an organization that has always been committed to supporting careers in academic medicine and providing leadership opportunities for young faculty members. I served as Chair of the Southern Section and later became President of the national AFMR organization when I was 38. Those early career opportunities afforded me amazing experiences that included meeting with members of congress and testifying before congressional committees in support of improved funding for clinical and translational research. This important work of AFMR and many other professional organizations eventually led to the development and approval of pivotal legislation called the Public Health Improvement Act in November of 2000. This legislation established in statute the K30 Clinical Research Curriculum Awards (later folded into the Clinical and Translational Science Awards), the K23 and K24 grants and the Loan Repayment Program for Clinical Researchers. For the young faculty and trainees in the audience, these programs have become a way of life and the lifeline for early career development. It was a privilege to work with Lynn Morrison, our Public Policy Director and the leaders in our society to be a tiny part of the process that resulted in long-term federal funding for these important clinical and translational research programs.

As my career progressed, I became involved in the Southern Society for Clinical Investigation (SSCI) and continue to feel a strong connection to the SSCI mission of providing a forum for students, trainees and young faculty to meet and present their research in a very supportive environment. I may

be trying to set a record for the longest time on the SSCI Council, having served 2 terms as a Counselor, a long term as Secretary/Treasurer and now beginning a term as President-Elect. I look around this room and see an aging group of investigators who have been attending this meeting for 30+ years. I am, like me, also encouraged to see many younger faces here. I still love the afternoon breakout sessions where I can relive my experiences 30 years ago as a nervous newcomer to this academic career. Many of you are here because of the mutual commitment of SSCI and AFMR to the mission of mentoring future generations of medical investigators and promoting careers in academic medicine—as recipients of student and trainee travel grants.

I recently came across an article by Sharon Staus et al¹ describing a systematic review focused on identifying factors that influence the decision to pursue a career in academic medicine. They found that completion of an MD degree along with an additional degree, such as the K30 program Master's degree in clinical research, other master's degrees or a PhD, and completion of a fellowship program with a research component were each associated with choosing a career in academic medicine. Another important finding was that completion of research and publication of the research while in medical school and/or residency was also associated with an increased chance of pursuing an academic career. Not surprisingly, mentors or role models were found to be critical in influencing decisions. That is exactly what the Southern Societies meeting is about. We are here to promote future academic careers by providing direct mentoring and providing a forum for students, trainees and young faculty to present their research. The same study found that the desire to teach and conduct research in an intellectually stimulating and challenging environment were motivating factors. I can reflect on 30 years in this career and find those factors continue to motivate me. I would add the opportunity for leadership—in big ways and small—directing programs, leading organizations, divisions and departments—but also the day-to-day opportunities we all have to lead in improving patient care, implementing quality and operational improvements, team building and work place innovations.

I want to encourage the younger attendees to consider following the path of an academic career. It is clear that my career challenges differed in many ways from those of my early mentors, just as the challenges you will face in your careers will be different from mine. But the common denominators of intellectual stimulation, inquiry and teaching while delivering state of the art patient care are consistent themes. I can say without question that is provides for a truly fulfilling career. I want to also remind you to remember to give back—be a generous mentor, step up and participate in these regional and national organizations and advocate for ongoing support of clinical and translational research.

In closing, I want to thank my early research mentors, particularly David Stephens and John Spitznagel, and the VA Research Program that provided 7 years of Career Development grant funding that was critical to establishing my research career. I would also like to acknowledge some women in science and medicine (some of whom I never met personally or

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FIGURE 1. Monica Farley and husband, Doug Aholt.

many years ago who took an interest in my research and encouraged me to submit a grant to her study section (which was later funded!); Nanette Wenger a pioneer as a woman in Cardiology at Emory for her inspirational career of service at Emory and nationally; Claire Pomeroy, an Infectious Diseases specialist who is a former Dean, Vice Chancellor and CEO of a Health System and now the President of the Lasker Foundation; and Nancy Andrews, the current Dean at Duke School of Medicine.

I want to give special thanks to my family—my husband Doug (Figure 1) and our 2 great kids, Clara and Henry. I cannot thank Doug enough for being my true life partner. Although he was studying for the bar examination and launching his legal career while I was in training, he generously did more than his share of domestic duties—laundry, ironing, groceries and house cleaning—and still does to this day. Together we managed to raise 2 great kids (one of whom recently presented her 1st



FIGURE 2. Dr. Farley's Infectious Disease supporters from Emory University (faculty and fellows in training). Left to right: Susan Ray, Abeer Moanna, Varun Phadke, Monica Farley, Minh Nguyen, Sol Aldrete, Cliff Gunthel, Evan Anderson and Sujana Reddy.

who were well before my time) who are role models and heroes, including Margaret Pittman and Rebecca Lancefield—early pioneers in microbiology; Suzanne Oparil an accomplished cardiologist and vascular biologist at UAB who has been a leader in SSCI and AFMR and the 1st woman to receive the SSCI Founders' Medal; Peggy Hostetter who was a moderator of a session at which I was presenting an abstract at the Clinical Research Meetings in Washington

poster at a scientific meeting), we have valued our family time, we both managed to coach kids' sports teams along the way and we now look forward to many empty nest adventures ahead.

So many thanks to all of you for this very kind award.

REFERENCE

1. Staus SE, Staus C, Tzanetos K. Career choice in academic medicine. *J Gen Intern Med* 2006;21:1222–9.