

MENTORING:

A powerful tool to improve diversity and inclusion in hypertension

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I am honoured to have been recently appointed as the new chair of the ISH Mentoring and Training Committee (MTC). The MTC is particularly close to my heart as one of its early versions paired me with Professor Gavin Lambert, from Swinburne University, Australia, back in 2012. Gavin's guidance over the years has been fundamental not only for my career progression, but without his support (and the support from my other mentors and sponsors) I would have probably left hypertension research by now. This should not come as a surprise considering we know that women drop out of science around my career stage¹. Adding to being female, I came from a developing country where research is far from being a national priority and I was diagnosed with cancer 5 years ago, right during the 'make it or break it' PhD to post-doc transition. Individually, all of these are reasons that make people leave science, academia and even medicine²⁻⁴. Over the years, Gavin has given me critical feedback on fellowship and grant applications, nominated me for awards, prepared me for job interviews, discussed career opportunities and directions, and set me up for collaborations. His friendship, however, was essential during chemotherapy. I was very fortunate to have such a wonderful mentor, and in my new role as chair of the MTC I aim to ensure others are given a similar opportunity.

Mentoring is also important to me because of my personal value of fairness. The same way that I believe every person has the right to age healthily (and, thus, my passion about hypertension research), mentoring improves opportunities leading to better equity and inclusion to all^{4,5}. Investing in mentoring should not only equip our junior members to become

better scientists and leaders, but also help ensure that our field has a bright future. While mentoring benefits all, it is particularly important for women^{4,6}, who are under-represented in our community.

We are actively working to address some of the barriers junior researchers and women in hypertension face from a mentoring perspective. In partnership with the Women in Hypertension Research Committee, we have developed the New Parent in Hypertension Travel Award to support three ISH members with primary care responsibilities for a child/children to attend the 2020 ISH conference. What is new about this award is that it can be used in anyway the awardee sees fit to support their attendance: these awards could be used to support local child care, a babysitter or to bring someone else with them to look after their children. Similarly, we are also launching a new Developing Countries Travel Award to support the attendance of two ISH members that come from a developing country. The awardees of both travel grants will be appointed ISH mentors, who they will have the opportunity to meet face-to-face at the conference in Glasgow in May 2020. Applications for both awards are open until the 15th of March, and more information can be seen here.

We understand it can be nerve-racking to ask someone to be your mentor (believe me, I have been there!), but that's something the ISH-MTC can help you with. ***If you are looking for an International Society of Hypertension mentor, please fill in this form (it will take you less than 10 min and, believe me, it might change your life).*** Any age, gender and career stage ISH members are welcome

to apply. We have also developed a new package you will receive to make the most out of your mentoring relationship.

We are very fortunate to have amazing examples of leadership and research excellence at several career levels, research areas, and countries as part of our ISH community. For those more experienced, engaging with junior peers can be very rewarding⁷ – if ***you would like to become a mentor, please fill in this form (it will take you less than 5 min)***. As the ISH mentoring scheme now completes nearly a decade of successfully matching mentors and mentees, we welcome those who have transitioned from PhD students and post-doctoral researchers to also transition from mentees to mentors. In

recognition of the wonderful mentors we have in our society, we also welcome applications for the ***ISH Distinguished Mentor Award*** until the 15th of March – more information can be found **here**.

Finally, we look forward to hosting you for a mentoring and networking event in Glasgow! This is a unique opportunity to meet and greet some of our senior members (including the ISH Council), learn more about mentoring and the awardees, and network with our wonderful ISH researchers. Registrations to this event will open soon – it is one not to miss!

I look forward to seeing you in Glasgow!

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