



The Revolving Door of Mentorship

MANESH PATEL: You know, one of the things that's most exciting about being at Duke and the experience at Duke is really the feeling of community, and your training never stops, as we know.

NEHA PAGIDIPATI: I worked with several of our senior faculty who put my growth before their own academic interests, and that is something that is just so hard to find. And yet we find that in spades at the DCRI.

MANESH PATEL: You know, I was a fellow in the DCRI in the early 2000s and then 2006 came on faculty. My first trial after coming on faculty I was fortunate to be able to work on the ROCKET-AF trial with Ken Mahaffey, again, and Rob Califf. My fellow as a junior faculty member on that trial was Jon Piccini. And I got the sense of just how big research clinical trials are even though I'd done some of those, gave me great experience.

JONATHAN PICCINI: One of my favorite parts of the DCRI fellowship is that you learn by doing. And so getting to be the lead fellow on the ROCKET-AF clinical trial was an amazing experience.

I would not be an attending physician and a principal investigator without lots of people taking the time to teach me and show me the ropes, and I'm incredibly indebted to all of those individuals.

BRIAN SMITH: I think the types of projects that DCRI runs lend themselves to training the next generation, and I think having that focus on training has been key for DCRI because a lot of the faculty that, you know, are now at DCRI came through the fellowship program.

MANESH PATEL: And I often tell our fellows now one of the best things you get to see at the DCRI is that we put our fellows and our junior faculty forward. You know, not a lot of other programs with somebody out of fellowship would have gotten to do the things I got to do: lead the EC calls, help think about the stats, think about what we are doing at the site level, go present at investigator meetings. You know, with great opportunity comes great responsibility but it's really an amazing opportunity to do that.

BRIAN SMITH: The mentors at DCRI see the benefit of having trainees in their programs and being able to leverage their programs for training. It's really part of what you know why they're in academia is the training piece. It's not just to get their work done themselves; it's really to train others. And so that's, I think, woven into the DNA of DCRI.

NEHA PAGIDIPATI: And it's been a truly amazing experience to have been in the program and to now see what the program means to the DCRI on kind of a different level now from a leadership perspective. I kind of have an even deeper appreciation for it than when I was in the program itself because I can see



the amount of effort that goes into trying to develop and grow the next generation of clinical research leaders in the country and in the world.

And now, in a role where I am starting to learn how to do mentorship it's been a really fulfilling experience, because I know how much it meant to me, and I'm hoping that I can mean that in somebody else's growth and their development, as well.

JONATHAN PICCINI: Now that I've been on the faculty for about a decade, people always ask me, what are you most proud of, or what was the most enjoyable thing you've done at Duke. And I don't ever need to think about it because it's the same answer every time: The best part of my job is working with the young people that I get to mentor.

And so, for me, when I walk into the DCRI and think about, you know, all the things that we're going to get done in the day and in a year or over 10 years, making sure that we're training the leaders of clinical research for the future is probably one of the most important things we'll do when we come to work every day.

NEHA PAGIDIPATI: I will say that I am finding that, you know, mentorship is not a talent; it's a skill. It's something that you build and you develop over time, and I think that the DCRI as an institution values that skill of mentorship.

And you have to work at it. I actually consider Sana Al-Khatib to be my mentor for mentorship because she is just a phenomenal mentor. So to be able to have people to learn from how to actually do it right—if you're in a difficult situation, how do you think about putting your mentee first? It's really important to be in an environment where mentorship is that valued. And so I think, for me, being able to kind of come full circle has been a really exciting experience.