December 8, 2019

F32 Application

National Institute of Heart, Lung, and Blood

National Institutes of Health

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to enthusiastically recommend Dr. Anish Shah in his submission for a F32 fellowship award from the NIH/NHLBI. I have collaborated with Anish over the past 2 years on his research on heart rate variability (HRV) and its relationship to ischemic heart disease, and I have seen tremendous growth in his research potential – from topic-specific knowledge to scientific writing. I would like to emphasize that Anish has a promising future career in psychophysiology and arrhythmia research.

I am a practicing electrophysiologist and NIH-funded investigator. I am doing related research on autonomic function and cardiac repolarization in patients with defibrillators, with a focus on their associations with acute and chronic mental stress. I am the PI on an NIH funded study (1R01HL89340-01) titled “T-Wave Alternans and Emotion in Daily Life,” which studies laboratory and daily life anger as a risk factor for TWA. As a co-investigator on R01, “Neurobehavioral Correlates of Mental Stress Ischemia” (R01-HL59619-05S1), I have also evaluated the autonomic nervous system’s effects on mental stress ischemia. This aligns well with Anish’s area of interest and has allowed us to interact and provide feedback on shared projects. His first author manuscript, entitled “Alterations in heart rate variability are associated with abnormal myocardial perfusion”, is work that we have collaborated on over the past two years. He also presented this work at the national level at the American Heart Association Scientific Sessions 2018 in Chicago, where he was selected as one of the top research posters of the event. He shows a sharp intellect and a mathematically oriented approach to this field. He not only worked with challenging time-series data but was able to perform the biostatistical analysis independently for a complex population using mixed effects models to account for within-twin associations. This speaks highly of his perseverance and ability to learn and challenge himself to grow as a researcher, reflecting his promising career as a clinical investigator.

Although I am located at a different institution than Anish, I have worked with his mentor, Viola Vaccarino, for several years, and have served as a co-investigator on her study “Mechanisms Linking Depression to Cardiovascular Risk” (2R01HL068630-06A2). Our collaborations have been very productive, and we have published together on 8 papers in well-respected journals. I have also worked with his other mentor, Amit Shah, and was on the mentoring committee for his K23 award. The overlapping relationships and collaborations that exist serve as an excellent environment for Anish to flourish.

Anish continues to be intelligent, hard-working, and well-suited for the research career he has planned. He has the unique opportunity to study the mechanisms behind depression and ischemic heart disease in a set of well-conducted studies at Emory, and this will likely be an outstanding combination. He has responded to critiques of his manuscript with thoughtful and prompt changes, showing a persistence and dedication that I’m sure will be integral to his future success. I look forward to his growth and development, and future collaboration with Anish and his mentoring team.

Sincerely,

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