

Assistant Professor of Pulmonology & KL2 Scholar

Melody Zainal

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"The K grant has provided me with valuable protected research time and training in team building and collaboration."

Bio

When her father died of lung cancer 15 years ago, Melody decided to become a lung cancer researcher. Working her way through college, she achieved her goal, becoming an assistant professor of pulmonology at an academic health center. She was awarded a KL2 grant shortly afterward to pursue a project analyzing pulmonary data from a wide variety of sources. While she maintains her clinical practice 25% of her time, the other 75% is dedicated to her research project. With the direction and assistance of her mentorship committee, she has identified interdisciplinary project partners at other academic health centers and has worked to coordinate data collection with them. The process of building and managing this team has been highly instructive for Melody, as she balances time management of her own schedule with the heavy demands on the time of her collaborators. Melody's research time is split between meetings with her mentors, peers, and collaborators, supervising the staff on her project, writing grants, writing manuscripts and reviewing others', committee work, data collection and analysis, submitting conference abstracts, and speaking at national meetings.

Education: MD, Pulmonology

Years of experience: 4

Work location: University offices, lab, mobile on her laptop

Goals

- To build a community of practice in her field and to integrate theories, data, techniques, and tools
- To receive independent R funding
- To learn to effectively manage teams



Software attitude & use

- Proficient in a variety of software tools that she employs for research
- Data harmonization among the various datasets collected via her collaborators is challenging. Melody has worked closely with data analysts at her institution to produce workable datasets
- Statistical software: Introductory R class to gain knowledge about the analytical and statistical components of her studies
- Research and collaboration: EndNote, Microsoft Office Suite, Box, OneNote



Scholarly Outputs

- One article as first author since receiving her K award (she is first on four total)
- Conference abstracts and presentations
- Grant applications
- Reviews manuscripts

Pain Points

- Her interdisciplinary focus may be a disadvantage for finding positions, funding, and publication outlets
- Frequent meetings, though useful, are logistic challenges
- Time constraints as a busy clinician

Motivators

To have protected time for research, in order to publish important findings, succeed in future grant applications, and establish a sustainable research career

To benefit from the K grants' overall goals of offering career development and mentored experiences

To drive her own study and contribute new information and insights to her field

Wants/Needs

- More recognition for her work on interdisciplinary teams through formal mechanisms at her institution (e.g., promotional system)
- Wants, with the help of her mentors, to build a network of research collaborators and peers
- To build her skills in relationship management through methods such as soliciting feedback from her interdisciplinary team and staff, and practicing communication skills like active listening

Professional Development

Her department supports any ongoing educational classes she might need, particularly continuing medical education to maintain her certifications

Tracks developments in her field via journal emails with tables of contents, and by following academics in her field on Twitter, who retweet press releases, articles, and other important information

Would like to take more courses in statistics and data analysis, however the demands of her project leave little time