

Mehret Birru

- **Background**

I grew up in Pittsburgh and returned home after my college graduation. For two years, I did health literacy research at the University of Pittsburgh, and helped to set up a teaching and research collaboration between Hampton University and the University of Pittsburgh. During this time, I decided to go to medical school. I ultimately chose Pitt because it was the only MD-PhD program that I'd applied to, and I realized about halfway into the application process that I wanted to attain both degrees. So Pitt it was! I'm happy to be here. Pitt is a great place to train because it is such a strong research institution and there are so many people doing fascinating work here. Pittsburgh is also a great place to live... the cost of living is reasonable, the city is beautiful, and there is lots of culture here.

- **Areas of Interest and dissertation work**

We examined the associations of ethnicity, socioeconomic status and cardiovascular risk factors in relation to measures of subclinical CVD.

- **Remote training experience:**

The SWAN is a nation-wide study, and I've had opportunities to work with investigators from the other clinical sites.

- **Perspectives on the program**

The advantages include having a group of people who are doing related research—there is plenty to learn, and doing research in an isolated area can be difficult.

- **Advice to current and prospective students:**

I would suggest that students start to hone in on some possible areas of investigation early in their training. My mentor was especially good at helping to direct me to a project that ended up becoming my dissertation work. Make sure that you talk to people and hear what they are doing, and look for opportunities to get involved.

- **Future Plans and opportunities:**

I'll finish medical school and start residency somewhere in something 😊