

- **Why should I consider the University of Pittsburgh for my training in Epidemiology?**

The University of Pittsburgh offers a diversity of research topics and advisors to choose from. Incoming students can explore a variety of research topics and identify an advisor that will develop into a lasting and rewarding relationship. Additionally, students can collaborate with others faculty to develop their research skills further.

- **Background**

I am originally from Duluth, MN, the second coldest city in the US. I received my bachelor's degree in Biology from the University of Minnesota. During my undergraduate years, I conducted basic science research in breast cancer. Afterwards, I took a year to continue this research in a post-bachelorette program at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. In June 2004 I moved to Pittsburgh, PA to begin the combined MD, PhD program. After completing the first two years of medical school I enrolled in the Epidemiology doctoral program in the Graduate School of Public Health. I choose the University of Pittsburgh because it offered a great variety in clinical research. Early on I did not know which direction of research I wanted to focus on during my doctoral studies, but I knew many highly qualified researchers surrounded me and I would succeed.

- **Areas of Interest and dissertation work**

The theme of my doctoral project was novel risk factors associated with subclinical cardiovascular disease. I worked with three different study populations, 1) the Study of Women's Health Across the Nation (SWAN), 2) the Tobago Family Study and 3) the Study to Slow Adverse Vascular Effects (SAVE).

- **Remote training experience**

For my remote training experience I spent 5 weeks in Tobago conducting carotid ultrasound scans. In preparation for this, I was trained at the Ultrasound Research Laboratory here at the University of Pittsburgh on collecting carotid ultrasound scans. I collected images on 149 participants from the Tobago Family Health Study.

- **Perspectives on the program**

The epidemiology program at the Graduate School of Public Health provides a well-rounded experience in public health, epidemiology, clinical research and biostatistics. Coursework is designed to give each student the basic knowledge in these areas and the dissertation advisor further develops the trainee's skills as they advance through the program. Upon completion of a PhD, the student can develop their own research question, design the data collection process, analyze the data and present their work both in an oral and written format. These invaluable skills are the building blocks to an independent researcher.

- **Advice to current and prospective students**

Find the perfect advisor; this cannot be emphasized enough. Having a mentor to guide you through the PhD process, support your choices during the training and continue to mentor you as you graduate is the most important part of graduate school. The research topic may not be your top choice, but if it is interesting and you have a well thought out training plan, you will have a rewarding experience.

- **Future Plans and opportunities**

After completing my PhD and returning to medical school I have decided to pursue a residency in diagnostic radiology. The combination of epidemiology and radiology will not only give me an endless supply of intellectual stimulation and career advancement with new technologies it will give me the opportunity to spend time with my husband and little boy.