

Background

Before coming to graduate school at the University of Pittsburgh, I was an Exercise Science student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. As a recreational athlete, the focus of my early training was on strength and conditioning. Although working with athletes was fun, it didn't provide for me a meaningful experience. As a senior, I decided that my focus should be on helping people maintain and improve the quality of their lives through disease prevention and management instead of helping people develop a nice six pack for the beach. I decided to come to the University of Pittsburgh because the faculty here impressed me with their passion for research and helping others. Now as a recent graduate from the program, I can confirm that the program lived up to my expectations. I was given an opportunity to train with some of the brightest minds in Pittsburgh, and collaborate with great investigators from around the country.

Areas of interest and dissertation work

My dissertation was on the relationship between physical activity and chronic kidney disease and kidney function. More broadly, I have interest in physical activity assessment and the relationship between physical activity and cardiovascular disease.

Remote training experience

I have had the opportunity to work with the Strong Heart Study, a prospectively study of cardiovascular disease and its risk factors in American Indians. Thus far, I have worked with this population to examine the relationship between physical activity and kidney disease progression. I also plan to explore the relationship between physical activity and ankle brachial index in this population.

Perspectives from the program

The program really complements what you learn from the core curriculum especially in areas of professional development. Developing in areas such as public speaking are immensely important and the unique approach taken by the training program has been a wonderful experience. I joined the training program and a postdoc and I wish I had some of these experiences as a graduate student.

Advice to current and prospective students

My advice to current and prospective students is to remember to enjoy yourself. You are not just training in Pittsburgh, you're also living here. Pittsburgh has a lot of great things to offer from great restaurants to parks and recreation so take a break from your research from time to time and take in the culture. Although it's a relatively small city, you'd be surprised with all the great things available for you to do.

Future Plans and opportunities

I plan to continue with my postdoctoral training which will hopefully lead to a faculty appointment.