

Clinical Research Training Program Fellow 2008-2009

Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD),
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My name is Carter Monique Owen, and I participated in the 2008-2009 Clinical Research Training Program (CRTP). I am originally from Augusta, Georgia. I attended the University of Georgia where I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in biology and a Bachelor of Arts degree in French. I also spent one year in Paris, France in the Sweet Briar College Junior Year in France program. I began medical school in 2005 at the Medical College of Georgia, where I am now a 4th year medical student.

I learned of CRTP in my first year of medical school from an alumnus of another research program who spoke very highly of his research year and the opportunities that it continued to afford him into his residency. He gave me a listing of many of the year-long research opportunities for medical students. I narrowed my interest to about three programs with CRTP at the top of my list. I was interested in clinical research, and I couldn't think of a better place to be than the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

I knew after my third-year clerkships that I was very interested in women's health and a residency in obstetrics and gynecology so I searched for research in this area. I had the great fortune of joining the lab of Dr. James Segars, a leading expert on uterine fibroids, in the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. I was interested in doing research on uterine fibroids because they are common, cause great morbidity in millions of women, and very little is understood about how they develop and grow.

I spent the majority of my year working on investigations related to the altered mechanical signaling in uterine fibroids. My CRTP mentor, Dr. Segars, challenged and motivated me. He helped me set goals and supported me in achieving them while giving me the freedom to be creative and run my own project. I also worked very closely with the labs of Dr. Rocky Tuan in the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases and of Dr. William Catherino in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. These collaborations speak to the rich environment offered at the NIH. The relationships that I developed with the amazing people in these labs were integral not only to my project but also in my growth as a budding clinician-scientist.

I had a very productive year in the CRTP. I had an abstract accepted for the international meeting of the *Society for Gynecologic Investigation* in Glasgow, Scotland where Dr. Segars introduced me to many of the leaders in obstetrics and gynecology. I recently had three more abstracts accepted for the upcoming meeting of the *American Society for Reproductive Medicine*. I am currently writing the paper that will report my findings from the year. In addition to my lab work, I spent some time writing a review paper about the effects of imprinting in assisted reproduction which is already in press.

My typical week involved lab work with primary cell culture and various mechanical loading experiments as well as weekly gynecology/reproductive endocrinology and infertility discussion rounds, reproductive endocrinology and infertility journal club meetings, CRTP clinical rounds and clinical research seminars and journal clubs. There was so much to absorb from the rich environment at the NIH. There were so many lectures to attend, leaders to meet, and opportunities to learn. In our spare time, my fantastic CRTP colleagues and I explored the numerous museums, monuments, restaurants, theaters, shops, and parks in the D.C. metro area.

My experience at the NIH reinforced my choice to pursue a residency in obstetrics and gynecology and a career in academic medicine. My year in CRTP taught me about the importance of translational research and the integral role that physicians must play in the transition from bench to bedside. I hope that in my future career I will continue to be involved in this process. I am excited to return to the NIH in the fall of my fourth year to participate in the Clinical Electives Program, and I would love to pursue future research opportunities in the intramural program. Any student who is interested in pursuing a year of clinical research should seriously consider CRTP. I guarantee that it will be a fulfilling experience.