2017 Quilligan Scholars: Reflections from 2017 SMFM Annual Meeting

We were humbled to have been selected as the 2017 Quilligan Scholars and could not have asked for a better introduction to our role as Quilligan Scholars than the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM) 37th annual Pregnancy Meeting in Las Vegas. While we recognized being named a Quilligan Scholar was an honor, it was truly the connections made thanks to the incredible work of the Foundation for SMFM, Drs. Edward Quilligan, John Queenan, and Lawrence Platt, and Michele Prince that our expectations were surpassed one hundred-fold.

As third year OB/GYN residents with ambitions of entering the field of Maternal-Fetal Medicine and representing institutions from across the United States, we came to the Pregnancy Meeting excited to learn more about this arena to which we plan on dedicating our professional lives. The first night we had together as a group sitting alongside Drs. Quilligan, Queenan, Platt, Copel, and Norton as well as former Quilligan scholars and Queenan Global Health Fellows was a truly moving experience. As we each shared a few points about our personal journeys which led us to pursue a career in perinatology, we not only got to know each other better but walked away with a deepened appreciation of how eclectic we are and the strength in our diversity. It was empowering to hear the personal, heartfelt stories of our mentors and colleagues. It was also sincerely encouraging to learn from those investing themselves in our mentorship why they view what they do as important and about their confidence in each of us.

Needless to say, we went into the next two days of the Pregnancy Meeting on cloud nine where we found our incredible mentors who ensured that our spirits and enthusiasm never touched the ground. We had the privilege of walking (or sometimes jogging) alongside leaders in MFM, including Drs. Vincenzo Berghalla, Nancy Cheschier, George Macones, Michael Foley, Christian Pettker, Alfred Abuhamad, Mary D'Alton, Cynthia Gyamfi Bannerman, Lorraine Dugoff, Jeanne Sheffield, Kate

Menard, Sarah Kilpatrick, Alison Stuebe, and Lorelai Thornburg. While our experiences varied with regard to which sessions we attended and the topics of discussion, we each were able to get a glimpse into what it was like to be part of a tightknit community of brilliant and passionate people striving to advance the field in order to take better care of women and children. We were each thrilled to find out that our mentors, in addition to being powerhouses, were "normal" like us- quick to laugh, go for a second cup of coffee and share about the challenges they faced in getting to where they are. It will be a pleasure to see how the relationships facilitated at this meeting will carry forward in the years to come!

On reflection of our early months as Quilligan Scholars, including the Pregnancy Meeting which really allowed us to see the context in which our potential will be realized, we each feel incredibly blessed and excited to follow through on the aspirations we vocalized when going through the selection process. We look forward to continuing to interact with and encourage one another, especially in our upcoming biostatistics retreat in May 2017 and next year's Pregnancy Meeting but also in between.

We are so thankful to all those who have invested their time, energy and resources into the Foundation for SMFM in order to allow us to have this unique and invaluable experience. We are especially appreciative of Drs. Quilligan, Queenan, and Platt and Ms. Prince for their unwavering and tireless commitment to the program - we are so grateful to each of you.

Many, many thanks,

Maria Andrikopoulou, MD, PhD, Winthrop University Hospital
Victoria Greenberg, MD, Christiana Care Health Services
Anne West Honart, MD, MPhil, New York University
Michael Miller, MD, Naval Medical Center San Diego
Courtney Mitchell, MD, PhD, University of Alabama Birmingham
Emily Oliver, MBBS, MPH, The Ohio State University
Martha Tesfalul, MD, University of California San Francisco