

Why Carolina?

Let our graduate Tar Healers tell you!



SCHOOL OF
MEDICINE

Pediatric Hematology-Oncology

Tina Abrams

(Class of 2022)

CURRENTLY I AM ... An Assistant Professor at the Medical University of South Carolina where I am working as the Director of Pediatric Sickle Cell Care. I am also a mom to a wonderful and wild 4-year-old and married to an amazing man who has journeyed with me across the southeast over the last 6+1 years for my training. If medicine doesn't work out for whatever reason, I would open a bakery 😊.

I CHOSE UNC BECAUSE ...of Patrick. Well, there are other things, but Patrick really makes the program feel like home. I also knew I wanted to do hematology and Patrick let me know I would be able to make that happen there. The Blood Research Center is an amazing resource to other fellows like me who love classic hematology.

MY UNC EXPERIENCE WAS ... unique, but in a good way 😊. There really aren't a lot of places like UNC.

MY FAVORITE UNC MEMORY IS ... the soda machine in clinic. IYKYK. But really there are too many to narrow down to one!



Sam Wilson (Class of 2022)

CURRENTLY I AM ... a lifespan hematologist and sickle cell disease (SCD) researcher at UNC. I predominately manage adults living with SCD, but my training in combined pediatric & adult hematology has accelerated my career. I also have two children who keep me busy!

I CHOSE UNC BECAUSE ...of the ability to do combined adult and pediatric hematology training, readily available mentorship and ability to research in sickle cell disease specifically and classical hematology broadly, and most importantly, the amazing people at this institution. I enjoy being a part of the community at UNC and this was a huge part of my desire to stay after training.

MY UNC EXPERIENCE WAS ... amazing. I was able to develop expertise in hematology and my research career was accelerated with the combination of excellent teaching and mentorship.

MY FAVORITE UNC MEMORY IS ... the relationships that I developed with multiple families where I was involved in their care, including some that I keep in touch with.



Chris Park (Class of 2021)

CURRENTLY I AM ... An Assistant Professor at the Oregon Health & Science University, where I have my dream job as a pediatric neuro-oncologist. I am interested in both patient care and clinical trials development. I am also a husband and father, and I spend most of my time doting on our daughter. I also enjoy hiking, playing the piano, diving into a new book, or falling into a new Netflix true crime documentary binge.

I CHOSE UNC BECAUSE ... My mentor from residency told me he would disown me if I didn't at least look at UNC. From the moment I interviewed, I was hooked. I wanted a mid-size program with a wide spectrum of learning opportunities, in a program with quality training and graduates, with a strong and positive reputation. I wanted to be set up well for success after I completed fellowship, and UNC gave me all of that!

MY UNC EXPERIENCE WAS ... Broad. Not only did I get broad clinical training, but I also had fantastic scholarship opportunities. I participated in the Clinical Pharmacology Training Program and worked on the development of new targeted therapies for medulloblastoma.

MY FAVORITE UNC MEMORY IS ... Either getting a GIANT teddy bear from one of my patients or finishing clinic up early to go watch baseball with the Program Director (Chris forgot to answer this question so it was obviously filled in by the Program Director without a hint or shade of bias or preconception).



Josh Bies (Class of 2020)

CURRENTLY I AM ... An Assistant Professor of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Children's Hospital and Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska - where I went to medical school and residency and have tons of family. I practice general Peds Hem/Onc and have started to develop expertise in Vascular Anomalies and Genetic Cancer Predisposition at my institution. Outside of work I spend most of my time with my family - my incredible wife our two sons Arthur and Jonathan.

I CHOSE UNC BECAUSE ...it really checked all the boxes for me. It was a big enough program to get all the experience and opportunities I wanted, but small enough so that I could easily make excellent connections with the amazing faculty.

MY UNC EXPERIENCE WAS ... fantastic! The atmosphere of learning is incredible. I fondly remember our tumor boards in which I always felt comfortable participating and encouraged to bring whatever I had learned to the discussion.

MY FAVORITE UNC MEMORY IS ... the joint Duke/UNC journal clubs we did at faculty member's houses where we got to have some excellent food, beer - and academic discussions of course!



Brendan Kleiboer (Class of 2020)

CURRENTLY I AM ... Director of Pediatric Hemostasis and Thrombosis at the HTC of Levine Cancer Institute and Levine Children's Hospital in Charlotte, NC and Clinical Assistant Professor at Wake Forest University. My wife and I have a toddler son who loves to be outside and loves music. I'm currently the reigning champion of our hospital system talent show!

I CHOSE UNC BECAUSE ...I knew I wanted clinical training and research opportunities in the bleeding and clotting disorders realm, and UNC has a deep and outstanding reputation in the science of hemostasis. I knew I would have opportunities to pursue NIH training grants and have access to a world-class School of Public Health where I completed coursework in clinical study design.

MY UNC EXPERIENCE WAS ... perfect for setting me up for my current job as the director of our pediatric bleeding and clotting disorders program. I came away from fellowship with foundational knowledge more than adequate to pass our board certification exam but also had the ability to individualize my experience in such a way that I could flex my interest and expertise in classical hematology. This allowed me in part to come away with two first-author publications from my work in fellowship.

MY FAVORITE UNC MEMORY IS ... going to Edinburgh, UK for a week for Hemophilia Academy! The learning was top notch and so were the pubs and music and sights!



Jen Brondon (Class of 2018)

CURRENTLY I AM ... Assistant Clinical Professor and Associate Fellowship Program Director here at UNC! I love doing a little bit of everything. I work outpatient in Chapel Hill and Raleigh and attend on both the Heme/Onc and Stem Cell Transplant services. My greatest accomplishment in life by far is my family. My husband is an adult (eek!) Gastroenterologist and we have 3 crazy children.

I CHOSE UNC BECAUSE ... This is the easiest question for me to answer. The PEOPLE!!! It's hard not to love Patrick the first time you meet him, he is like a dad. For fun, I make my kids call him "Grandpa" and for a while I think they thought he was their Grandfather. EVERYONE is down to earth and wants to help you learn and grow. It is the perfect mix of Oncology, Hematology and Transplant. You see and experience it all. Your opportunities are endless in terms of connections, resources and research opportunities at UNC!

MY UNC EXPERIENCE WAS ... PRICELESS. I wanted a place that I would get a well rounded education but being able to do so in a collegial environment and that's exactly what I got. Coming to UNC was one of the best decisions I have ever made in my life and hope to never leave Chapel Hill. My co-workers have become my extended family.

MY FAVORITE UNC MEMORY IS ... taking pictures of Julie Blatt when she finds food around clinic and stuffs it in her white coat pockets.



Betsy Finch

(Class of 2018)

CURRENTLY I AM working in the sweetest place on earth Hershey, PA. I am an assistant professor in pediatric hematology/oncology at the Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. I am the director of pediatric neuro-oncology and the pediatric hematology oncology fellowship program director at my institution. My true passion is patient care which this job allows me to be highly involved in. I recently bought an inflatable kayak and have started kayaking with friends from work.

I CHOSE UNC BECAUSE ... I wanted to go somewhere that was different from my pediatric residency training that allowed me to see new perspectives. I wanted to stay on the east coast to be near my family and UNC had a very welcoming vibe.

MY UNC EXPERIENCE WAS ... Enlightening. I enjoyed caring for a variety of patients but was also encouraged by my program director to go outside my comfort zone and do bench research. Without his encouragement I would have missed out on a wonderful opportunity that opened a lot of doors for me.

MY FAVORITE UNC MEMORY IS ... spending Halloween each year with my co-fellow and her family.





Jennie Hart (Class of 2017)

CURRENTLY I AM ... the clinical director of pediatric hematology/oncology and the pediatric residency program director at Sinai Hospital in Baltimore. I'm so fortunate to be doing what I thought would be just a dream. When I am not at work, I love spending time with my husband and three kids. We will do absolutely anything that gets everyone out of the house so they don't fight over their prized possessions. It's a busy life!

I CHOSE UNC BECAUSE ... I wanted a program with an equally strong balance of oncology and benign hematology patients. When I visited, I loved Chapel Hill and thought the faculty seemed terrific and down to earth.

MY UNC EXPERIENCE WAS ... meaningful. I was able to build the foundation of my career in curriculum development and educational research while also learning from some of the most dedicated and skilled clinicians I've worked with.

MY FAVORITE UNC MEMORY IS ... Stuart Gold in his giant inflatable ballerina suit! But also the incredible patients. I keep their kind notes and their pictures in my desk drawer to cheer me up when I need it.

Maria Boucher (Class of 2016)

CURRENTLY I AM ... An Assistant Professor at UNC where I am working as the Director of the Pediatric Sickle Cell Disease Program. My husband and I are proud parents to an almost 4-year-old girl. If I were not in medicine, I think I would have been a planner ... travel or wedding planner.

I CHOSE UNC BECAUSE ... My mentor during residency was an alumni in PHO here at UNC so insisted I should come check it out. He knew this Puerto Rican girl needed warmer weather too. I also loved the idea of serving the growing Hispanic community. UNC felt like home.

MY UNC EXPERIENCE WAS ... everything I could have hoped for and more.. Great exposure to general pediatric hematology oncology and many opportunities to develop my career in classical hematology. UNC gave me the tools necessary to succeed as a clinician in my first job out of fellowship. I spent over 5 years in Upstate NY, and I am thrilled and privileged to be back HOME!

MY FAVORITE UNC MEMORY IS ... when I met my co-fellow Smitty on a bus ride to orientation. Also, seeing Stuart wearing his Halloween ballerina costume was a treat.





Smitty Smitherman (Class of 2016)

CURRENTLY I AM ... the proud dad of a kind and fierce daughter, husband to an incredibly brilliant and nurturing wife, a lover of 80s and 90s pop culture, an Associate Professor of Pediatrics at UNC-Chapel Hill with clinical and research interests in how cancer and its treatment causes premature aging in survivors, and Medical Director of the UNC AYA Cancer Program (that's our AYA team in the group picture celebrating the opening of UNC's new AYA outpatient infusion center). My NC roots run deep and am so grateful to help care for members of this community.

I CHOSE UNC BECAUSE ...(and keep choosing UNC) because of the people and how they create a culture of excellence without pretension, collaboration, inquisitiveness, and personal concern.

MY UNC EXPERIENCE WAS ... extremely rewarding and at times very hard (as is any training in pediatric oncology). I received rigorous and balanced training in oncology and hematology, and more importantly, mentorship in providing compassionate, patient-centered care. I also took advantage of the Master of Science in Clinical Research training program that gave me the foundation needed to build a career in clinical and translational cancer survivorship research.

MY FAVORITE UNC MEMORY IS ... too many to single out just one, here's a few: the annual Andrew Smitherman Ice Cream Social, celebrating on stage at the annual Be Loud! Sophie Foundation (<https://beloudsophie.org/>) concerts that support our AYA program, being at the Eagle Scout induction ceremony for a patient, witnessing Armando Bacot gently holding one of our smallest patients in clinic, and learning that a mentee was awarded a grant after a lot of persistence. So many good memories and reasons for gratitude.

