

Talavera, Maria

My name is Maria M. Talavera, DO and I'm a neonatologist, physician scientist, but most importantly, mother to a spunky 2-year-old little girl. I'm an attending neonatologist at Nationwide Children's Hospital (NCH) and The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center in Columbus, Ohio. I am also a principal investigator in the Center for Perinatal Research in The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital. The focus of my research is on intestinal inflammation with a goal of elucidating novel molecular targets that could potentially alleviate or prevent the intestinal inflammation associated with necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC). As a neonatologist, I see first-hand the devastating effects of NEC on our most premature, vulnerable patients and strive to one-day be able to contribute valuable research to the eradication of this disease.

I grew up in New York City attending inner-city public schools where my love for math and science opened doors including a full academic scholarship to attend a private university. It was at the University of Rochester that my interests in research began in a biochemistry laboratory under the guidance of Dr. Allen Senior. It was here where I saw first-hand how hard work and relentless dedication can guide powerful discoveries. My first exposure to NEC research was not until fellowship at Columbia University/Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital in New York City. I had the privilege was working under Dr. Michael Gershon, a pediatric gastroenterologist and world renowned scientist on the enteric nervous system. I used experimental models of NEC to study the role of enteric serotonin on intestinal inflammation. This fellowship-training period was invaluable and critical to shaping the career I have today. As a junior faculty at NCH, I enjoy dedicated research time to pursue my goals that include: (1) establishing a research program with focus on the unique targets in the inflammatory cascade pathognomonic of NEC and (2) to determine the translational significance of specific immunologic targets in the developing neonate and their potential to identify those at highest risk of developing NEC. I want to thank the Society for Pediatric Research for this honor and look forward to a productive research career as a member of SPR.