

## **ASNR Virtual Mentorship Program Stories: Dr. Jacqueline Palmer**

For early-career researchers, mentorship can accelerate professional development and help reach career goals more effectively and efficiently. Dr. Jacqueline Palmer is currently a tenure-track Assistant Professor in the Division of Physical Therapy at the University of Minnesota Medical School. Her research lab aims to understand the link between cerebrovascular brain health, brain function, and the brain's adaptive, neuroplastic capacity for learning and behavior. As a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Kansas Medical Center, Dr. Palmer participated in ASNR's Virtual Mentoring Program, paired with Dr. Jyutika Mehta as her mentor. Dr. Palmer shared her experience with the Program and answered some frequently asked questions in our interview below.



### **What was your experience like going through the application process?**

The application process for the ASNR Virtual Mentoring Program was both structured and insightful. It required a thoughtful reflection on my career goals and what I aimed to achieve through the Program. This introspection was valuable, as it helped me articulate my aspirations and identify areas where I needed guidance. The process itself was straightforward, but it did require a commitment to detail and clarity to ensure that my objectives were well-communicated. Overall, it was a beneficial exercise that set the foundation for a fruitful mentoring relationship. I would encourage investigators with research-focused goals to apply, and you can always resubmit your application if you are not selected in a given year.

### **Can you describe the time commitment that has been necessary for your participation in this program?**

Participating in the ASNR Virtual Mentoring Program has required a significant, yet manageable, time commitment. Beyond the hour-long meetings each quarter, preparation for these sessions was essential. I would prepare in fragments, jotting down questions and topics for discussion as they arose during my daily work. This ongoing preparation ensured that each meeting was productive and focused. Additionally, attending group meetings provided an opportunity to hear from other mentors and mentees, which further enriched the experience. The key is to view the preparation and meetings as integral parts of your professional development, rather than additional tasks.

### **How do you prepare for meetings with your mentor/mentees?**

Preparation for meetings with my mentor was a continuous process. I maintained a notes tab where I recorded questions and topics as they came to mind, particularly those related to current challenges, such as navigating the interview and negotiation process for faculty positions. Prior to each meeting, I reviewed these notes and structured my questions to be open-ended, allowing my mentor to share their experiences and stories. This approach ensured that the conversations were insightful and that I could learn as much as possible from my mentor's experiences.

### **Can you share some of the ways you have benefitted from participating?**

Hearing the unique stories and experiences of a senior scientist provided me with valuable insights that I could apply to my own career path. For instance, I gained crucial advice on interview techniques, salary negotiation, and promotion strategies. The mentorship helped me navigate complex professional situations with greater confidence and clarity. Additionally, the perspectives shared during group meetings offered a broader understanding of various career trajectories and challenges within the field.

### **Is there anything you wish you would have known or done differently when you first started in the program?**

One thing I wish I had known at the outset is the importance of asking specific, sometimes sensitive questions, such as those about salary negotiation and promotion. Initially, I was hesitant to delve into these topics, but I later realized that these discussions could provide significant insights. Being more forthright about broaching these topics earlier in my meetings with my mentor would have enhanced my learning during the program. Additionally, I found that preparing open-ended questions that allowed my mentor to share their experiences was highly effective. Structuring the meetings this way facilitated deeper and more informative conversations.

### **Do you have a message or advice for people who are considering applying?**

For those considering applying to the ASNR Virtual Mentoring Program, my advice is to be intentional and specific in your application about what you aim to achieve. Clearly outline your career goals and areas where you seek guidance. Understand that the time commitment extends beyond the scheduled meetings; it includes ongoing preparation to make the most of each session. Approach the mentorship with an open mind and be ready to ask questions that allow your mentor to share their rich experiences. This will maximize the value you gain from the program and significantly enhance your professional development.