There are many things that may shape our careers and influence our development as Postdocs and mentoring is one of those. You may have several mentors throughout your career, these will be people from within your field, your PI or collaborators; other academics who you wish to discuss your development with; your peers; and mentors from outside of academia who may offer you advice on alternative career paths. Building successful mentor/mentee relationships is an important and dynamic process, it can help you evolve as a scholar, develop original research, and move towards independence.

The postdoctoral association mentoring committee work hard each year to bring postdocs together with first class mentors from both academia and industry. The 2015 All Star Mentoring event saw 7 mentors from industry as well as 9 academic mentors come together to discuss career paths and many other topics with postdocs from Boston Children’s Hospital in two rounds of small discussion groups. There was also a great chance for postdocs to network with all the mentors following the discussions.

Boston Children’s Hospital Vice President of Research Administration, Gus Cervini, gave a talk followed by the presentation of the Boston Children’s Hospital Best Mentor award. Many postdocs are very pleased with their mentor, we received 20 nominations, resulting in a shortlist of ten mentors from which Boston Children’s Hospital’s best mentor was selected. Several PIs were nominated by more than one of their postdocs, and they were spread over different departments, included young and experienced PIs, and both clinical and basic research mentors.

After careful deliberation, one exceptional mentor had to be chosen from all of these excellent nominations. Boston Children’s Hospital’s Best Mentor 2015 is Dr. Shenandoah Robinson from the department of Neurosurgery. Her postdocs call her an “unconditional supporter that fosters each individual lab members’ passions and interests”. She has a track record of mentoring both clinical and re-
search fellows, helping them to develop toward the next step in their career and ensuring they are in the best position possible to take this step. As a result of this guidance her mentees have acquired both influential academic positions and prestigious clinical fellowships. Read more about Dr. Robinson’s approach to mentoring on the following pages!

![Image](image.png)

**An interview with 2015 Best Mentor Award Winner Dr. Shenandoah Robinson**

**Congratulations on being Boston Children’s Hospital Best Mentor of 2015! Were you surprised to hear that you won this award?** Yes, I was very, very surprised. It’s a great honor.

**Have you had any mentors that had a big influence on you? How did they influence you?**

Yes, I have been exceedingly lucky to have tremendous mentors throughout my career. One of my earliest mentors in neurosurgery was a surgeon-scientist, Dr. David McLone. He was an excellent surgeon, a caring doctor, and true scientist. His influence counter-balanced the many naysayers along the way. I have also been very fortunate to have several additional mentors over my career who demonstrated the highest integrity, goodness and respect, both as individuals and professional colleagues. I strive to meet their example, and to not be distracted by those who don’t exhibit such values.

**At what stage of your career do you feel that you started mentoring others?** In medical school. I will be forever grateful to the fourth year medical student who first gave me guidance when I decided as a second year student to pursue neurosurgery. He introduced me to the neurosurgery team, including Dr. McLone, and provided valuable initial insight into what I needed to do to be competitive as an applicant for residency. It thrills me today when I see a young trainees take someone under their wing to help another person get started.

**What do you feel is the most important element to good mentoring?** Listening, being available, and being supportive. By identifying what steps it will take to get mentees to their desired goals and by providing sustained support.
and guidance to help them reach those goals. I really benefitted from many mentors who dedicated their time and skills to help me succeed, and I try to pay that back.

Do you have a standard ‘repertoire’ that you use for each mentee, or is most of the process adapted to individual needs? The process is very individualized, partly because I interact with a range of mentees from those in high school to fully-trained colleagues. They also have varying goals and personalities.

Do you mentor individually, or do you form mentor teams? I typically mentor individuals. I work with a lot of teams in various roles, and one could call that mentoring by example. I recognize the culture varies by institution and background. Some prefer that undergraduates perform some portion of a project for the graduate or medical student, and that person reports to the post-doc, resident or fellow, who then reports to the PI. I encourage teamwork, but I don’t find that hierarchical approach that effective or rewarding. Even as an undergraduate working in a lab, I reviewed my data directly with the PI. It may not be the most efficient, but there is perhaps the most benefit for all involved. I’m old school and want to see the primary data myself.

Do you encourage feedback from your postdocs? If so, what has been the most fruitful feedback that you have received and incorporated in mentoring them? I try to encourage feedback, and to adjust to each individual’s needs and style.

What is your opinion on peer mentoring? Do you encourage peer mentoring within your group? I try to encourage each person to identify his or her own strengths and weaknesses, and to learn from others how to improve and be more effective.

As a clinician and a scientist yourself, do you feel there is any difference between mentoring research fellows and clinical fellows/residents? Not really, as the emphasis is on helping each individual reach his or her specific goals.

Thank you Dr. Robinson and congratulations on winning the Boston Children’s Hospital Best Mentor Award 2015!

Quick tips: Useful information for Boston Children’s Hospital Postdocs

New postdoc policy: May 2016 saw the release of the new Boston Children’s Hospital Research Fellows Policy Manual. The major changes that have been made concern policies related to unpaid fellows, termination for lack of productivity and increased vacation time. All fellows should have received a copy of this policy via email. If you would like a copy it can be downloaded from our website tinyurl.com/nfxk6qq.

National postdoc association membership: Boston Children’s Hospital Postdocs are eligible for FREE membership to the NPA. Go to https://npamembers.site-ym.com/general/register_member_type.asp and select Affiliate Individual Member. Sign up with your hospital information, get access to all their content and stay updated on all matters postdoc!

Massbio Membership: Get FREE membership to Massbio by creating a “Member Portal Account” at massbio.org. Be sure to register with your Boston Children’s Hospital email and explore all that Massbio has to offer.

Boston Postdoc Association: Boston Children’s Hospital postdoc association are proud to be members of the Boston Postdoc Association. A Boston wide organisation advocating for and bringing together postdocs across the Boston area. Find out more at bostonpostdocs.org.
Follow us to find out more about our great events!
Pub nights, Career development events, Mentoring events and Social outings.

Would you like to contribute to the newsletter? Or help promote our next event?
Email us at postdoc-publicaffairs@childrens.harvard.edu