

## **Interview Assessment #4**

Recently, I had the great opportunity of interviewing Dr. Zia. She works as a research scientist and a doctor at UT Southwestern, specializing in pediatric hematology. Through this interview, I was hoping to learn more about what Dr. Zia does during her work day, and how hematologic conditions are diagnosed and how they show up (whether they could be inherited or not). I saw that Dr. Zia has also participated in research about leukemia and other conditions, so I wanted to ask her about the research she conducted and what she found from the research.

Dr. Zia explained to me that each day was typically different for her, as she spent 80 % of the time focused on research, and about 20 % in the clinic. She said that because her job is more geared towards research, she has quite a different schedule in comparison to the other people she works with. I thought that this was very unique, as research is something that I would really like to do in the future. I didn't know before that you could choose which aspects of hematology - research or clinic care - that you would want to focus on more. Dr. Zia continued and explained that the protocol nature of a lot of the conditions helps in finding and treating conditions, in hematology and other specialties of medicine. However, in hematology there is a lot of gray area, because you may not know what condition a patient might have, and sometimes it takes a while before an accurate diagnosis is made. Besides treating patients, she also does research, mentoring, and writing papers.

In terms of work hours, Dr. Zia said that her work and personal life is quite blended, as she does not have definite work hours. This meant that after seeing patients, she might be able to do research later on throughout the week, and sometimes she would get home later in the day. She said that the job requires you to be a little bit flexible, because with all the meetings, research, teaching and patient visits, sometimes things could change. Dr. Zia said that one of the most helpful things in her journey to becoming a hematologist was finding a helpful mentor. She said through mentorship, she gained a lot of firsthand knowledge and experience. She also said that formal training, as well as taking higher level classes suited to the topic of medicine you are in is helpful as well. These are things that I can keep in mind as I prepare for college, medical school and other educational preparation.

Next, we talked about whether or not hematologic conditions can be prevented. Dr. Zia told me that some can be prevented, but some cannot be, if they are inherited. However, certain conditions such as sickle cell disease and anemia can be cured through stem cell transplantation and gene trials. I learned that coagulation disorders are identified when patients have symptoms of irregular bleeding such as bruising easily, gum bleeding and sometimes as a result of surgery. Lastly, we talked about Dr. Zia's research. She has done a lot of research, and she has written papers about the early warning signs of a bleeding disorder, however there was a specific publication that intrigued me. Dr. Zia explained that case, in which a young child with anemia was getting treatment, but there were not signs of improvement. To find out what was going on, doctors backtracked and looked to see if there was another underlying condition. They found that there was a vitamin B12 deficiency as a result of a genetic condition.

This interview with Dr. Zia was extremely helpful and I learned a lot of information from her. I really enjoyed speaking with her about how she balances her life and finds time for everything important to her. I could tell that she is very passionate about her job, and I aspire to follow in her footsteps some day.