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My name is Eunice H. Rhee, and I had the opportunity to participate in the CRTP for the 2006-2007 academic year. I was born in Seoul, South Korea and came to the US at the age of 10. Not speaking or understanding a word of English, I was thrown into the New York public school system wide-eyed and overwhelmed. With time and effort, however, I began to excel in my classes and soon found myself at MIT, where I received a Bachelor of Sciences in Brain and Cognitive Sciences. Then, I returned to my home state, New Jersey, for my medical education at UMDNJ – Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

During my third year of medical school, I got to experience firsthand the ever-changing nature of evidence-based medicine. I frequented websites such as PubMed® and UpToDate® to research the latest diagnostic criteria or the most current therapies for various diseases I encountered in the wards. That is when I realized that I did not want to just practice this kind of medicine but wanted to get involved in the actual evidence building process. Therefore, I began searching for a program that would train aspiring physician-scientists. Luckily, two students from my medical school were participating in the 2005-2006 CRTP. When I asked them about the program, they both raved about how much they were enjoying it and what a great learning experience it had been for them. After further research into the program, I realized that this was indeed a unique program, unlike any other, that is truly devoted to training clinically minded physician-scientists.

A few months later, I found myself at NIH, faced with the difficult decision of choosing a mentor and a project for my year. This was especially a hard decision since I had yet to decide on my career specialty. However, I knew that I was interested in cancer research, so I spoke with several investigators from various branches within the National Cancer Institute (NCI). I eventually chose to work with Dr. Crystal Mackall in the Immunology Section of the Pediatric Oncology Branch at the National Cancer Institute. She had a

very active laboratory that allowed for much flexibility and freedom for me to pursue whatever projects fit my interests. I had the chance to work on a variety of projects throughout the year. I participated in the launch of a new and exciting protocol, helping to revise the protocol many times throughout the IRB approval process. Also, from this new protocol, my mentor and I came up with some questions I could explore at the bench, and I did some flow cytometry experiments, which was a great learning experience. And I also had the opportunity to write a manuscript using data from a completed protocol, which consumed many months of my stay here at NIH. I compiled, analyzed, and wrote up the results from a novel immunotherapy protocol for refractory pediatric sarcomas. While working with my mentor, I thoroughly enjoyed the intellectual stimulation I experienced daily as we explored the latest ideas in the field of immunology and cancer immunotherapy.

My experience at NIH spanned the whole spectrum, all the way from the bench to the bedside. On any given day, I could be working on the latest draft of a protocol in the morning and then running flow cytometry experiments in the afternoon. Also, when my mentor was on service at the clinic or the wards, I often accompanied her to meet the patients who were enrolled in various NIH protocols and are thus treated at the NIH Clinical Center. And of course, the whole year was interspersed with various CRTP activities that enriched my learning experience here, such as the biweekly journal clubs and the clinical teaching rounds. I especially loved the clinical teaching rounds, where we met actual patients enrolled in various NIH protocols. We heard about groundbreaking research being done in fascinating and often rare diseases, such as Xeroderma Pigmentosum, Job Syndrome, and Paroxysmal Nocturnal Hemoglobinuria.

This past year of research has solidified my desire to pursue a career in academic medicine where I could be constantly challenged with new ideas. Additionally, this NIH year has been invaluable for me in terms of picking a specialty to pursue. I had access to great mentors who were always willing to listen to my struggles with the career decision and provide helpful guidance along the way. I truly enjoyed my interactions with the pediatric patients and their families here at the NIH, and I hope to start my training in pediatrics after graduating.
The truly unique and impressive feature of NIH is the cutting-edge research that is being explored in practically every field of science and medicine. I would not be surprised if my career path and research interests lead me back to NIH one day.

One of the best features of the NIH CRTP is the diversity of the research fellows. I made many great friends within the CRTP, with whom I hung out regularly. We were able to enjoy the unique environment of the DC metro area, exploring various museums and monuments during our free time. We also explored the array of great restaurants found in the downtown Bethesda area. In addition, I also became actively involved in a local church, where I also developed many close friendships.

Overall, this past year with CRTP has been one of the best years of my life, both personally and academically. I am truly grateful for the opportunity that I had been given

to explore my interest in clinical research, and I enjoyed my experience at NIH tremendously.