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What issue has been persistent/hard to resolve in your area of expertise?

The ever changing, unregulated drug supply can make it challenging to systematically study and understand the mechanisms of and best ways to treat opioid use disorder- especially for targets like withdrawal and craving. It has been several years since the emergence of fentanyl and there are still gaps and questions about how to best adapt treatment for those who are chronically exposed. The emergence of new analogues and adulterants- like fentanyl analogues and xylazine- underscores the importance of being agile and ready to adapt protocols to fit the shifting landscape.

To what do you attribute your success?

Finding good mentors and collaborators is vital to doing well in research! At the beginning of my career, I was very excited and passionate about addiction research, but I found academia to be a strange culture to navigate at times. This was compounded by the fact that I am not a particularly extroverted person. Having mentors to offer advice, opportunities, and direction and who connect you with other people in the field is incredibly valuable. Also, finding a scientific home – like CPDD- is important for getting involved in committees, collaborating on symposia, and generally building connections. CPDD offers ample programs for finding new mentors for those who are not super comfortable approaching people spontaneously.

Was there a time in your career that you found particularly difficult, and how did you get through it?

Academia can feel quite competitive at times. At the beginning of my career, I found myself comparing my work and C.V. to others. This caused unnecessary stress that did not necessarily translate to more productivity. It became apparent to me that good science that moves the field forward is about collaboration – not competition. To address issues related to addiction, we need all hands on deck and I think it's important to remember we need to work together to ultimately find good solutions.

What advice would you give to a new grad student, a senior grad student, a new postdoc, or a new investigator?

You won't know what you like or what you are good at unless you try out a lot of different things. To that end, pursue opportunities with committees or take classes and workshops on topics that

pique your interest. This helps you figure out what you want to do but it can also differentiate your skills and expertise from your colleagues. It's important to carve out your own research area and skill sets that allow you to make unique contributions to a team.