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Dr Falk/Guts UK Awards 2022

F1/F2 RESEARCH AWARD WINNER: Dr Jessica Spiers

PROJECT:

Factors Associated with Hepatocellular Carcinoma Stage at Presentation and Survival in an Ethnically Diverse UK Population.



Dr Spiers undertook this research at the Barts Liver Centre at Queen Mary University of London. She is currently an academic FY2 Doctor at the Royal London Hospital, Barts NHS Foundation Trust.

Dr Spiers explains:

'I have chosen to undertake research in this important area because I am particularly interested in the interrelatedness between medicine and socioeconomics and how this intersection helps determine healthcare outcomes.

'People with liver cirrhosis are at risk of developing liver cancer and there are surveillance guidelines in place in the UK that aim to detect cancers at an early stage in this patient group. The most common cause of liver disease is a condition called non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, but most of the research about surveillance for liver cancer comes from people with hepatitis B and C.

'Therefore, while we know that liver cancer surveillance is effective in people with hepatitis B and C, we do not yet know how suitable the current surveillance is for people with fatty liver disease. We also know that ethnicity is a risk factor for liver cancer and that people from different ethnic groups have different outcomes.

'In this project, we will look at all people diagnosed with liver cancer in 4 different parts of the UK and compare the way in which people who have fatty liver disease were diagnosed compared with others and look for differences in outcomes. We will also compare diagnosis and outcomes between patients from different ethnicities.

In doing this work, we will find out whether the surveillance guidelines that we currently have are suitable for people with this fast-growing form of liver disease and liver cancer.'

Dr Spiers's Project Supervisor, William Alazawi, Professor of Hepatology comments:

'Dr Spiers is a conscientious, hard-working and very capable doctor. She has a strong academic track record and the attributes and potential to be a highly successful academic hepatologist in the future.

'The quality of her work is evidenced by the swift support she has obtained from colleagues in other centres who will collaborate on the proposal and the work proposed here will transform her excellent work into a high impact manuscript that Dr Spiers will lead. This in turn will stand Dr Spiers in good stead to apply for NIHR Integrated Academic Training and subsequently an NIHR PhD Fellowship.'

Dr Spiers states:

'I am honoured to receive the Dr Falk /Guts UK F1/F2 Research Award and I would like to thank my supervisor for the support and encouragement on this project.

'My ambition is to become an academic clinician, combining data-focused research with clinical work in gastroenterology and hepatology. This award provides me with the fantastic opportunity to develop research and data analysis skills in my area of interest, while addressing important and unanswered questions around disparities in HCC in the UK.

'Looking forward, I hope to use research and data analysis to improve patient pathways and clinical outcomes, in particular for individuals from disadvantaged and minority groups.'



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