

September 28, 2022

To: IPTA 2023 Congress Scientific Award Committee

Re: Kara West, Ph.D.

As Kara West, Ph.D.'s postdoctoral training director and supervisor, I am delighted to write this letter in strongest support for the Young Investigator Scientific Award through the International Pediatric Transplant Association (IPTA). Dr. West is a first-year postdoctoral psychology fellow in pediatric solid organ transplant at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) under the mentorship of myself and Dr. Jill Plevinsky. In August of 2022, Dr. West earned her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology with a certificate in Advanced Quantitative Analysis from the University of Georgia. Throughout her graduate studies at the University of Georgia and the College of William and Mary, Dr. West has demonstrated a strong commitment to research that studies risk and resilience factors among youth and families, with a current focus on those undergoing solid organ transplantation.

Dr. West's research program has been dedicated to better understanding what helps children thrive and demonstrate resilience in the context of adversity. Her work has studied factors that may differentiate youth who show adaptive versus maladaptive trajectories, with a focus on identifying protective factors that mitigate the negative effects of chronic stress or adversity. For example, her work has identified protective factors that may buffer the risks of maternal depression in low-income Black adolescents (West et al., 2020), and she has examined family-, parent-, and individual-level factors that promote the development of self-regulation among racially and socioeconomically diverse preschoolers (West et al., 2021). To address these important, complex questions her research uses multi-level and multi-informant approaches which often require advanced methodological and quantitative skills. The training she received in physiological and neuroimaging data, complex dyadic behavioral assessment, as well as her advanced statistical certificate have directly contributed to her ability to address novel questions related to predictors of children's developmental pathways.

Last year as a predoctoral intern at CHOP, Dr. West completed a rotation in pediatric transplant under my and Dr. Plevinsky's mentorship. She quickly expressed her desire to continue her risk and resilience research within solid organ transplant, focusing on coping and adjustment throughout the transplant journey. Her research interests also include assessment of psychosocial risk as it relates to important long-term health outcomes among transplant recipients. Her strong research background allowed her to take a leadership role on a manuscript that used a pre-transplant rating instrument to identify clusters of patients based on psychosocial risk factors, and examined longitudinal relations between risk clusters, patient characteristics, and transplant status. Recently, Dr. West's research interests have expanded to focus on youth and family coping and adjustment during the immediate six months post-transplant. She recently submitted a postdoctoral trainee grant to support a longitudinal study that examines resilience and youth, parent, and family functioning immediately post-transplant. This project would address a critical gap in pediatric solid organ transplant, as few studies have examined resilience and functioning in the first six months post-transplant. Dr. West's enthusiasm for this work is infectious and I am confident she will make meaningful contributions to the field of pediatric transplant.



Dr. West's exceedingly strong academic and research skills are evidenced in her productivity. To date, she has 12 published peer-reviewed manuscripts, three published book chapters, five empirical papers under review, and several in progress. Though a notable number of publications, most remarkable is how Dr. West has taken a lead or substantive role in each of the publications, either conceptually, methodologically, or statistically, and oftentimes, in more than one area. Dr. West has presented her work at numerous conferences over the past eight years and has demonstrated a commitment to dissemination of her research findings. Additionally, she has applied for and successfully obtained several grants to support her research, and she has earned numerous awards that recognize her meaningful research contributions and productivity.

Lastly, Dr. West has shown dedication and commitment to involvement in professional societies. Last year she became the student chair of the Solid Organ Transplant Special Interest Group within the Society for Pediatric Psychology. She also recently joined IPTA and the Society of Pediatric Liver Transplantation to continue to develop connections with multidisciplinary scholars in pediatric transplant. If awarded the Young Investigator Scientific Award, she would be afforded the opportunity to attend the upcoming IPTA conference and share her important research with leaders within pediatric transplant research. In sum, Dr. West's strong research background in risk and resilience, advanced training in methodological and statistical procedures, and her commitment to supporting youth and families along their transplant journey, make her an exceptional applicant for the Young Investigator Scientific Award.

Sincerely,



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