

September 15, 2012

Re: Dr. John Smith, MD, applicant to LEADER program

Dear Committee Members,

It is a great pleasure to write this letter on behalf of Dr. John Smith, MD, for his application to the program on Leadership Development for Researchers. Dr. Smith is a truly outstanding candidate for this course. We enthusiastically recruited John to join our Division of Nephrology at Duke after completing his training at the University of Michigan based on his accomplishments and research interests as a nephrologist with a focused research agenda on improving the quality of care for patients with chronic kidney disease. There was a great deal of excitement among the faculty as we were recruiting John to Duke since his research interests intersect so nicely with much of the work being performed within various clinical research groups throughout the health system. In addition, a review of his academic pedigree highlights another reason for the widespread enthusiasm. He excelled as an undergraduate at the University of California, San Diego, and received his medical training at the University of California, San Francisco. He completed his clinical training in internal medicine, pediatrics, and adult and pediatric nephrology at the University of Michigan. He then received training in health services research through the Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholars Program, a pre-eminent program for training clinical researchers.

As we predicted, he demonstrated tremendous initiative and enthusiasm towards embarking on the next phase of his career. He joined our nephrology group at the Duke Clinical Research Institute and was successful in receiving an NIH K23 Patient-oriented Mentored Career Development Award in his first year after fellowship training. Through his work, Dr. Smith has extended his previous work by examining differences in the management of cardiovascular disease among patients with chronic kidney disease. His ability to complete projects is demonstrated by the many manuscripts that have been published and several more that are underway. With his prior training in health services research and demonstrated commitment to quality improvement research he was also recently awarded the Carl W. Gottschalk Research Scholar Grant from the American Society of Nephrology. This award seeks to determine whether the intended impact of introducing improved clinical data (eGFR) to providers via an electronic health record enhanced the recognition of patients with chronic kidney disease and whether management of their disease was improved.

Through these and other projects, he has established several collaborative research relationships and now oversees several research staff. He clearly works well with others and is able to fulfill complex tasks within deadlines. These qualities have certainly assisted him in his successes thus far as a clinical investigator and will continue to serve him well as he makes the transition to an independent investigator. In fact, he has also begun to submit individual grant proposals which should allow him to obtain funding as an independent investigator following these career development awards. Because of the range of these research activities and steady productivity despite ongoing career development activities, he has been sought out by several trainees as a research mentor. All have had (or are in the process of having) publications from their work with him. With more projects and data to come, I am certain that more will continue to seek him out as a clinical research mentor.

In summary, John shows tremendous promise as an effective academic leader and I believe he would benefit tremendously from the LEADER program. In particular, he would benefit from the stated course goals of facilitating insight into leading and building his research team and to improve productivity and

maximize individual contributions. This program would seem to be a valuable mechanism to develop promising physician-scientists like Dr. Smith. The insights and training for his leadership development provided to him by this course would no doubt contribute towards his ongoing success as a junior investigator and mentor. If accepted, I will ensure he has protected time to attend all course activities and the department will cover his tuition costs. I provide my strongest possible endorsement for his application.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe,  
Chief, Division of Nephrology  
Department of Medicine  
Duke University Medical Center