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2023 SRCD Federal Policy Fellow Spotlight: Diane Gumina, Ph.D., M.S.

Diane Gumina is a Federal Executive Branch Fellow at the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) in the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

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In a few sentences, what is your role at the agency you work for?

My placement is in the Pregnancy and Perinatology Branch in the Division of Extramural Research. Our branch works to improve the health of pregnant people before, during, and after pregnancy; increase infant survival; and ensure the long-term health of mothers and children. In my current role I support research initiatives that aim to understand fetal development and improve ways to diagnose, treat, and prevent diseases during pregnancy and in newborns.

What interested you in becoming an SRCD Policy Fellow?

My graduate work focused on understanding cellular mechanisms of placental vascular development, but I kept considering questions like 'how does policy impact the implementation of my scientific findings?', 'what are the barriers to care facing my research population of interest?', 'what is the role of a researcher in advocating for patients?'. I had a difficult time identifying career roles that addressed these types of questions while utilizing the expertise I developed in graduate school. In my search I found the SRCD policy fellowship. I was drawn to the work that current and former fellows were doing and felt like it would be a great way to learn more about other fields, because at that time I had worked exclusively in academic settings.

How do you think the fellowship has helped further your career?

The fellowship has exposed me to a wide range of careers and has been incredibly helpful in narrowing the types of positions I will pursue at the end of the fellowship.

What piqued your interest in working in policy?

My previous work trying to understand the pathophysiology of pregnancy complications gave me insight on the diagnostic limitations and lack of treatment options. Taken with our country's worsening maternal morbidity and mortality rates, I knew that I wanted to contribute to making pregnancy safer and I felt that a policy-related role was the best way to accomplish that.

What has been your favorite aspect of SRCD's fellowship? Please explain why.

Beyond learning about different careers, my favorite part of the fellowship thus far has been the exposure to other scientific fields. I did not have any prior education in the social sciences, and the fellowship has provided multiple opportunities to see a wide variety of scientific specialties. It has been great finding similarities and opportunities for collaboration across disciplines. It makes me hopeful that we will find solutions to complex issues with multi-faceted teams!

Where are you from?

I am from a small town in Northeast Colorado, and all of my degrees (Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate) are from the University of Colorado. While I have lived in other places, Colorado will always be home.