Career Profile of Clinical Principle Investigator, Peter H Gilligan PhD

Position: Director, Clinical Microbiology-Immunology Labs and Phlebotomy Services UNC Hospitals
Professor, Pathology-Laboratory Medicine and Microbiology-Immunology, UNC SOM

When I was a graduate student, my plan was to apply to medical school because I wanted to be directly involved in patient care doing something that was relevant on a day-to-day basis rather than something that might have a long term pay-off. I had an encounter with Larry McCarthy who was then in the position I currently hold and that literally changed my life. I became a clinical scientist by doing a two year post-doc here in Medical and Public Health Microbiology. There are currently 12 training programs, one being at UNC. From there I became board certified by the American Board of Medical Microbiology by passing a written exam. I have to re-certify every 3 years by documenting 150 hours of continuing medical education to maintain my position on the medical staff at UNC. I am currently the Dean of the American College of Microbiology with oversight responsibility for that Board.

For the past 26 years, I have been at UNC directing the CMIL.

What do I do?
- central role in the diagnosis and management of infectious diseases
- central role in infection control and antimicrobial use
- recognize emerging disease threats/outbreaks including bioterrorism
- we educate & train health care providers
- we create new knowledge (research) to deal with practical problems

Best things about my job:
- Direct impact on patient care and public health of the community
- Intellectually challenging job requiring a broad fund of knowledge-need to know a little about a lot of things -I am never bored!!!!!!!
- Work with highly motivated and intelligent individuals
- Get to be at the cutting edge of infectious disease diagnosis-most recently worked on establishing techniques for diagnosis of 2009 H1N1
- I am involved in global issues as they relate to infectious diseases

Worse things about by job:
- Serving care providers who often do not allow us to help them.
- Learning to say “no!”
- Incredible amounts of governmental oversight
- Increasing emphasis on financial aspects of the job
- Declining talent pool of technologists
- Need to be responsible for an organization that run 24/7/365-we never close. Personally have worked through many natural disasters
What is needed to be successful in this career?

- Being willing to serve others, a good teammate, intellectually engaged
- Strong work ethic, seriousness of commitment, professionalism
- Creativity, enthusiasm, and intellectual curiosity

Links for more information on this career path:

Clinical Options for Basic Scientists
http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2002_04_26/noDOI.10873631546262641022

Translational Careers
http://www.sciencemag.org/content/324/5929/855.full?ijkey=eyDg7Ypw3oSXg&keytype=ref&siteid=sci

A Typical Path for a Physician-Scientist?
http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2003_10_31/noDOI.15775442586127585725