



Aloka L. Patel, MD

The Glore Family Professor of Neonatology

Advancement of Medicine

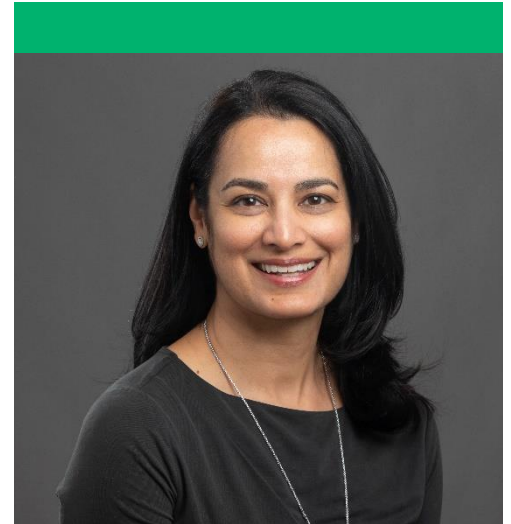
I continue to serve as a multi-principal investigator with **Tricia Johnson, PhD**, a professor in the Department of Health Systems Management, for two National Institutes of Health, or NIH, R01-funded studies. This work will determine if the removal of economic costs associated with providing breastmilk for hospitalized preterm infants is associated with longer and greater provision of breastmilk (which is known to provide health benefits to both infants and their mothers) and will directly measure these longer-term outcomes until children reach 2 years of age.

Also, I partnered with faculty in the Rush Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and their fellows to study a new model of postpartum care provided when mothers visit their infants in the NICU. The goal of this study is to increase compliance with postpartum care for mothers, who often neglect their own health care when they have an infant in the NICU. This ongoing study will provide pilot data that will serve as a foundation for a larger trial of this novel health care model.

Research

Thanks to your generous support, I have provided funds to support junior faculty members **Leslie Harris, MD, MHS**, and **Esther Lee, MD, MPH**, as well as our neonatal-perinatal medicine fellows, in their research endeavors. Dr. Harris conducts research characterizing maternal, family, and community factors that influence infant and maternal health, with an overall objective of identifying potential targets for interventions and policies. Dr. Lee continues to conduct global health research investigating the incidence of and strategies to reduce retinopathy of prematurity worldwide.

Glore Family Endowment funds also supported a clinical research coordinator for the Division of Neonatology. The funds have generously assisted faculty, advanced-practice neonatal nurse practitioners, and research team members in attending clinical and research conferences to improve clinical practices and present our research findings.





Community Outreach and Education

In 2023, **Suhagi Kadakia, MD**, assistant professor in the Department of Pediatrics, and I embarked on community outreach by partnering with Pickard Elementary School (part of Chicago Public Schools) and the Rush Education and Career Hub, or REACH, to provide “Mother’s Milk and Mammals” science education to fifth-grade students. Despite the many advantages of breastfeeding and national initiatives to increase breastfeeding rates, Black mothers provide breastmilk to their babies less frequently and for shorter durations compared to other mothers. Multiple underlying factors contribute to this finding, including cultural norms. Generations of Black women were raised with few breastmilk-feeding role models and little exposure to breastmilk feeding. This innovative program provides breastmilk-feeding education during science class, using mammals as examples. The program’s goals include helping future generations realize that breastmilk feeding is the norm for all mammals, including humans. This program expanded in 2024 with the addition of a second Chicago Public School: Hefferan Elementary School. This outreach has also served as an educational experience for neonatal-perinatal medicine fellows who participate.

In 2024, I was invited to serve as guest faculty for the American Academy of Pediatrics Fellows Perinatal and Developmental Medicine Symposia. I will continue to serve as faculty for this series for the next three years, allowing me to educate and meet fellows from around the country. Additionally, I have been invited to present our research and community outreach efforts at several national conferences this year.

Grants

The Glore Family Endowment funds supported activities in 2024 that resulted in both Drs. Harris and Lee receiving philanthropic support for their research in 2025. Philanthropic support for Drs. Harris and Lee is instrumental in enabling them to obtain preliminary data as they each apply to the NIH for research career development awards.

Publication Highlights – Abbreviated

- “Bone Mineral Density Deficits in Individuals Born Preterm Persist Through Young Adulthood: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of DXA Studies.” *Bone*; 2025
- “Neurodevelopmental Outcome and Healthcare Utilization in Very Low Birth Weight Infants After Treatment with Bubble CPAP.” *Respiratory Care*; 2025
- “Racial Disparities in Mother’s Own Milk Feedings Persist After Discharge from the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.” *Breastfeeding Medicine*; 2025
- “Mother's Own Milk Provision During the First 12 Weeks of Life by Gestational Age.” *JAMA Network Open*; 2025

Invited Presentations

- Disparities in Breastmilk Feeding Rates in Preterm Infants. Jerry Elliot Memorial Lecture. 104th AAP Perinatal and Developmental Medicine Symposium. Palm Springs, CA, 2024. Also at Washington University Newborn Medicine Division Conference. St. Louis, MO, 2024, and at UCLA - The 5th Annual Whitney Rawn Cale Lectureship. Los Angeles, CA, 2024
- Novel Strategies to Increase Use of Mother’s Own Milk in the NICU. Emory University 34th Annual Conference on Breastfeeding. Atlanta, GA, 2024
- Predicting and Optimizing ‘Coming to Volume’. Emory University 34th Annual Conference on Breastfeeding. Atlanta, GA, 2024

The Year Ahead: 2025 and Beyond

I will continue providing broad research support to the neonatology faculty through our Clinical Research Core and funding the fellows for their research. Future plans include continuing to support junior faculty member Dr. Harris to enable her to develop her research interests and apply to the NIH for a research career development award. Additionally, funds will be used to support equipment acquisition for junior faculty member **Madhavi Singhal, MD**. Dr. Singhal is developing a new clinical, educational and research program for point-of-care ultrasound, or POCUS, which is a new and rapidly growing area in neonatology.



With Gratitude

I am extremely grateful for the support of the Glore family, which allows the Division of Neonatology to support our multiple missions: excellent clinical care, education and research. The endowment is critical to supporting junior faculty investigators and trainees as they embark on their careers in neonatology. The endowment has provided the faculty with protected time to develop research ideas and obtain pilot data that will be critical to their paths toward becoming independent investigators.