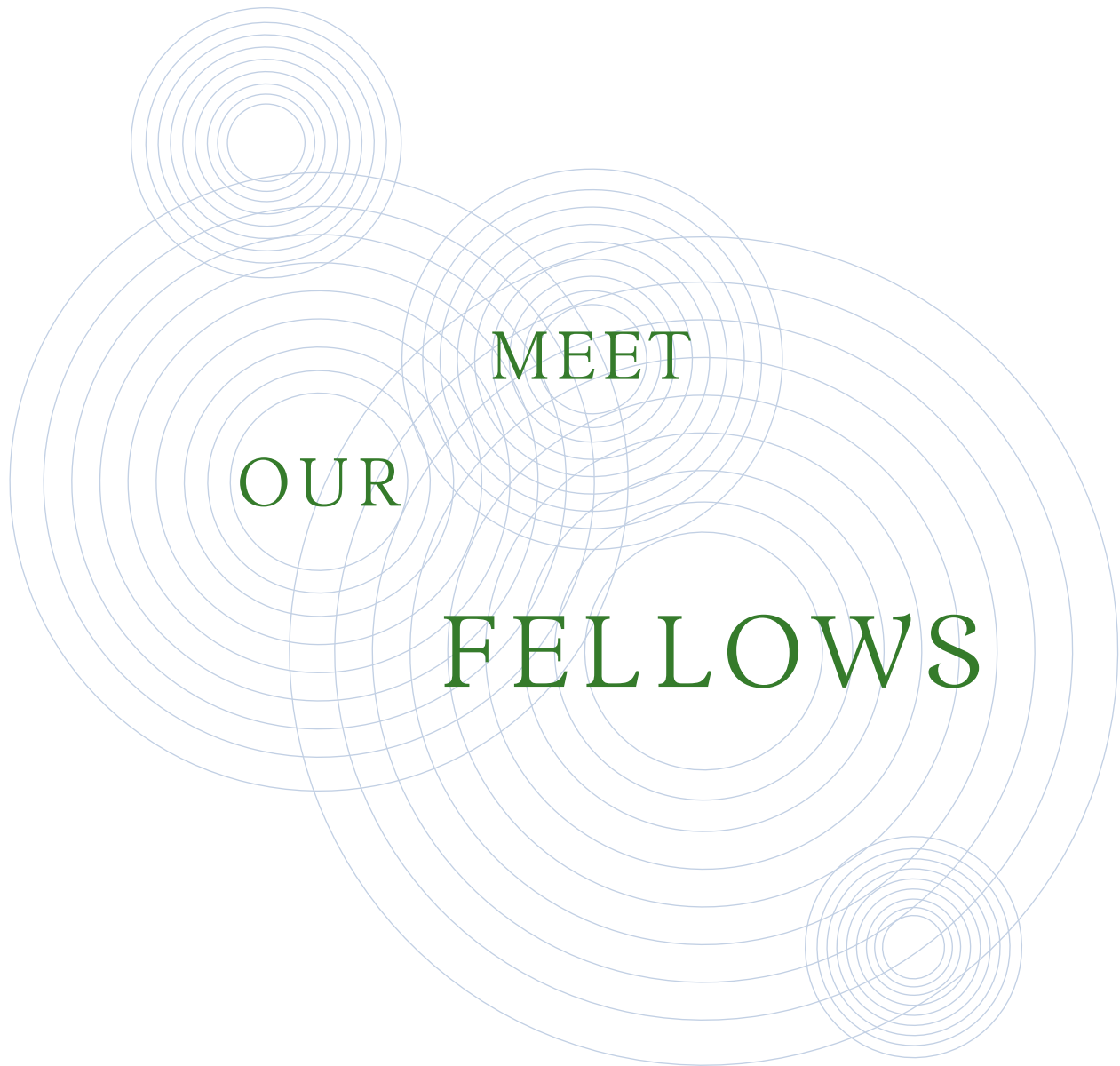




THE STONELEIGH FELLOWS PROGRAM



OUR

MEET

FELLOWS

DR. ROY WADE



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Roy Wade began thinking about becoming a doctor when he was an adolescent growing up in Atlanta, Georgia.

“As a child I was exposed to the rich African American history, culture and leadership in Atlanta,” he says.

“It shaped my expectations for what it means to be African American and for what I could do with my life.”

Wade remembers going with his father, a Baptist minister, to visit the sick and shut in. “I was no more than about 13 or 14 years old and we would go to the hospital so my father could minister to people who couldn’t get to church. I noticed how many relatively young African Americans were experiencing heart attacks and leg amputations from diabetes. They seemed too young to be carrying such a heavy burden of disease. I didn’t have a name for it then, but I was beginning to see how poverty negatively impacts health and well-being. That’s when I began to think about the possibility of being a physician and using medicine to help the people who need it most.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge and thank Bernardine H. Watson, the author of this article, who tells an inspiring story about Roy Wade. Ms. Watson interviewed Dr. Wade and wrote this profile based on their conversations. This is the twelfth in our series of “Meet the Fellows” profiles. The series is intended to provide readers with stories that describe our fellows’ motivation, goals and the philosophies that drive their work.

Ms. Watson is a social policy consultant living in Washington, D.C. She writes for and provides strategic advice to foundations, think tanks and nonprofits.



Wade's Stoneleigh Fellowship project, *Measuring and Responding to Childhood Adversity*, reflects the social consciousness he developed as a very young man. Working with policy makers, health professionals, youth and health and social service agencies, Wade will develop and test a measure to assess the stressful life events that negatively impact the health and well-being of low income, urban youth. The project's aim is to help mitigate the negative effects of chronic exposure to these stresses by providing these agencies with a tool that can help them better develop and target the services they provide to vulnerable children and their families.

Research on the effects of adverse childhood experiences is not new. The landmark Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study, published in 1998, found that those who experience childhood trauma, such as abuse, neglect and various other family stressors, are more likely to suffer from a wide range of negative adult health outcomes. These outcomes can include addiction and chronic illnesses such as diabetes, depression, lung disease and cancer. Since this original study, additional research has substantiated the close connection between childhood trauma and lifelong negative outcomes. As a result, health and social service organizations around the country are adopting trauma informed practices in an effort to improve outcomes for marginalized children.

Wade's work opens up a new dimension in the investigation of adverse childhood experiences (ACE's). He argues that current measures of childhood adversity are limited in scope and do not reflect the realities of urban, economically distressed youth. Wade adds that these measures only capture a small range of traumatic experiences and do not include more chronic exposures such as poverty, racism and community violence. Wade also says that little has been done to understand how adversity is experienced by vulnerable youth or to incorporate the voices of these youth into adversity measures. In an effort to capture a more complete understanding of adversity, Wade will incorporate these traditionally marginalized voices into his new measure.

Further, Wade understands that social service and health organizations know little about how to integrate adversity measures into everyday practice. Therefore, the tool he is developing will incorporate the perspective of these agencies and be easy for them to administer.

Wade's project builds on Stoneleigh's work to explore best practices in addressing ACEs, as well as his previous research in this area. In 2012, Stoneleigh funded an Emerging Leader Fellow to work with the Institute for Safe Families to support the new Philadelphia ACE Task Force. As a member of the Task Force, Wade understood the need for a greater assessment of ACEs among young adults who grow up in low income Philadelphia neighborhoods. As a result, he conducted research to identify and characterize the array of adverse experiences faced by youth who grow up in these circumstances. Study participants cited a broader range of adverse experiences than those reported in earlier ACE studies. This work laid the foundation for Wade's fellowship project. First, it supported his hypothesis that a youth perspective would enhance the validity of childhood adversity measures. Second, it pointed to the need for additional research to determine the role these broader indicators could play in causing children and youth to be more susceptible to poor adult outcomes.

“I BECAME A DOCTOR BECAUSE I WANTED TO PLAY A ROLE IN HELPING PEOPLE LIVE FULLER LIVES. I DECIDED ON PEDIATRICS BECAUSE CHILDREN ARE A WINDOW INTO THE FAMILY—TREATING “LITTLE BILLY” OFTEN GIVES YOU AN OPPORTUNITY TO HELP FAMILIES ADDRESS THE SOCIAL FACTORS THAT ARE AFFECTING YOUR PATIENT’S HEALTH.”

"I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE SOMEONE WHO MAKES A REAL DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD, WHO REALLY HELPS PEOPLE."

It took Wade many years to decide to become a physician. He had always had a love of science, and at different times during his education, considered careers in engineering and academic research. Wade wanted to be sure that if he chose medicine, he would be able to combine his commitment to social justice with being a physician. Midway through a PhD program in microbiology, Wade had an experience that helped him make up his mind. "I began shadowing a pediatrician, Dr. Bill Warren, who ran a subsidized clinic in the heart of Atlanta for people who couldn't pay for health care. The clinic, Good Samaritan Health, provided primary care services, dental services and counseling services. I saw people pay \$5 for the most complex procedures. Dr. Warren became my mentor and seeing medicine practiced this way made me understand that I could be a doctor and have a real impact on the lives of my patients."

Wade does not come from an urban, economically disadvantaged background. However, he says, "I think many of the experiences African Americans have are shared experiences and I build on that in my work." In addition, Wade has had academic challenges that help him understand how much harder it is for youth from poor homes and communities to succeed. "I've never

been the smartest person in the classroom," he says. "In high school I would stay up until 2 a.m. to finish homework. I was lucky to have a father who encouraged me and would congratulate me on my work ethic." Even with a stable, supportive family and community, he notes that "It took me awhile to figure out how to structure things so that I could be successful." Wade says that his own learning challenges have helped him be a more compassionate physician.

For Wade, the Stoneleigh fellowship represents a milestone that he has been moving toward throughout his medical training. But even after completing his pediatric residency, Wade felt he needed more training to fulfill his goal of combining medicine with social justice. "I was seeing patients from economically distressed backgrounds who were dealing with health disparities and I couldn't do anything to change the underlying determinants of the poor outcomes they were facing. I began to believe that the answer to improving my patients' health was working with community leaders who know their communities and have the trust of the people they serve." To his family's and many of his colleagues' surprise, Wade decided to pursue another degree—a master's in public health from Harvard, as part of the Commonwealth Fund Minority Health Policy Fellowship Program. "This program trains individuals to work with communities to address health disparities and help shape health policy," he says. "This is my vision and I believe the training I received at Harvard helped prepare me for the work I am doing with my Stoneleigh fellowship."





With the award of a Stoneleigh Fellowship, Dr. Roy Wade has begun to work with health and social service providers across the city to inform and field test a new approach to measuring and addressing childhood adversity. Wade believes strongly that community leaders must be empowered to advocate for the health of their constituents and is pleased to be working with these groups. "Community partnerships are an essential component of this project. I have identified organizations that are already doing the hard work in the community and have agreed to work with me on this project."

Another of Wade's partners on this project is the Philadelphia Department of Community Behavioral Health (CBH) which provides mental health and substance abuse services for Philadelphia County Medicaid recipients. Dr. Kamilah Jackson, Associate Medical Director for Child and Adolescent Services at CBH, is working with Wade to connect him with providers who will partner with him on this effort. Jackson says she is interested in supporting Wade's work because Philadelphia is in the process of developing a trauma informed system of care for working with vulnerable populations. She says Wade's new ACE scale "will help the field understand how to take what's been learned in the original ACE study and make it more relevant to adolescents in Philadelphia and other urban communities."

Wade will also have the institutional support of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). His primary mentor for

this work will be Dr. Christopher Forrest, a leading expert in constructing youth informed health measures. Physicians from CHOP's primary care network will help develop the instruments for the study. Wade has also put together an advisory group made up of policy makers, practitioners and researchers working on childhood adversity issues at the national, state and local levels. Members will help to identify policy and practice areas where this project can have the most impact and help disseminate the project's results.

In talking about his work, Wade tells the story of a 15 year-old girl he began treating during the second year of his pediatric residency training at the University of Virginia. He says she is in large part the motivation for the work he is doing today. "Living with her mom in an impoverished area of Charlottesville, she had been molested as a young child and was ostracized in her community because she was biracial. She suffered from depression and was often in trouble in school because of behavioral problems. I managed her care for more than a year. We were making strides but then her mother was placed in jail. Her life began to spiral out of control and she started getting in trouble again. After a while she stopped coming to the primary care clinic and ended up in an inpatient psychiatric facility for suicidal behavior. She was a beautiful young lady who was smart and could have been anything she wanted to be but she was placed in a terrible situation. She fell through the cracks and there wasn't anything I could do about it. So, I think about her a lot."

If Wade is successful, he will develop a measure that considers the types of chronic adversity this young patient experienced. His project will also produce research that informs the field about how chronic poverty and violence influence the health outcomes of children who live with these conditions. "I've always wanted to be someone who makes a real difference in the world, who really helps people," Wade says. Wade sees his fellowship as a means to change policy and practice so that systems can provide the care and services that vulnerable children need and so all children have the opportunity to live up to their potential.

Stoneleigh Foundation is a Philadelphia-based foundation established to help improve the well-being of children and youth. Focused on work that promotes change in our country's youth-serving systems, we meet our mission through fellowship awards that support outstanding individuals whose work unites research, policy and practice.

Learn more about our Fellowship Program and other work at stoneleighfoundation.org

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