

Emma Kaplan on Seeing Real Rehabilitation Research Results

*** Originally recorded on June 19, 2016, updated June 19, 2020.*** [Listen to it here.](#)

- EMMA KAPLAN: 00:08 [music] Working for the Foundation is incredibly satisfying. It is amazing what we all do here to actually see real results.
- JOAN BANKS-SMITH: 00:19 Welcome to our podcast series, My Life as a Research Assistant. This series is brought to you by Kessler Foundation, where we are changing the lives of people with disabilities. Research assistants are on the front lines of our research studies, collecting data, conducting interviews, testing subjects, and are the face of Kessler Foundation to our research study participants. In 2020 Kessler Foundation was ranked among one of the best nonprofits to work for and best places to work in New Jersey. Throughout this series we'll meet up with research assistants from our mobility, spinal cord injury, stroke, traumatic brain injury, and neuroscience in neuropsychology centers who have been with the Foundation for over a year and some that are now senior research assistants, nurses, M.D./M.S. candidates, postdocs, and those that have entered into many more professions.
- BANKS-SMITH: 01:15 Welcome to another episode of My Life as a Research Assistant. This is your host, Joan Banks-Smith. And today we have special guest Emma Kaplan. Emma made a career change in 2013, after the research division of a pharmaceutical company that she was working for moved and she didn't want to move. In between that time, she completed a clinical research associate certification program and became an intern at Kessler Foundation in March. In July of 2013, a position opened up and she applied for it and got it, and since then Emma has been with the Foundation. Welcome to the show.
- KAPLAN: 01:50 Thank you.
- BANKS-SMITH: 01:51 What do you bring to the table that maybe somebody younger doesn't?
- KAPLAN: 01:54 25 years of working experience [laughter].
- BANKS-SMITH: 01:58 That would do it. As you were taking the courses and then came to Kessler, what is it that you wanted to bring to the table as somebody with 25 years experience?
- KAPLAN: 02:11 Well, this is a career change, a complete career change. This is the first time that I've actually worked with humans. I used to work more with animals and cells. But I actually was very interested on the clinical trial aspect of the pharmaceutical industry. So I came looking to expand my knowledge of that through an internship. But since I've been here I have very much enjoyed working with the human population and working with the clinical trial side of actually being part of the-- of this side of the research. So I'm still here.
- BANKS-SMITH: 02:54 Well, that's good for us. And so on a day-to-day basis what do you do?
- KAPLAN: 02:59 I do the regulatory paperwork. I do the visits, along with another research assistant, the visits for the participants. And I do all the data entry for it, and I do the regulatory

Emma Kaplan on Seeing Real Rehabilitation Research Results

paperwork for the IRB. I have added more and more responsibility over the time that I've been here, on the intention of learning how to be a clinical research coordinator. I guess most research assistants focus more on working with the participants and only a little bit on the research coordinator part of the job, which is all of the IRB. I do a lot of the IRB work. I still do a lot of the participant work, but I do a substantial amount of the IRB work, and I help for other studies, not just for the ones that I am involved in.

BANKS-SMITH: 03:53

If I were interested in becoming a research participant, but were on the fence about it, what could you say that would help ease my feelings about becoming a research participant?

KAPLAN: 04:05

Well, more than ease your feelings about it I would be very clear about the involvement in the research. I would make sure that you understood what it involves, the risks. And then I would allow you to make up your own mind.

BANKS-SMITH: 04:19

How important is it that we have research participants?

KAPLAN: 04:22

Well, it's very important. If we don't have research participants then we can't run the trials. And that's the end of that.

BANKS-SMITH: 04:28

Before you go, do you have anything that you would like to share with us?

KAPLAN: 04:32

Working for the Foundation is incredibly satisfying. It is amazing what we all do here to actually see real results. I think working with the participants is probably one of the most amazing things I've done in my life, because you actually see them get better, and you see their resiliency after having gone-- in my case, for a stroke, and seeing them wanting to get better and doing everything that they can. And that is humbling and inspiring.

BANKS-SMITH: 05:07

Well, thank you so much for stopping by, and we wish you the very best as you continue your research here at Kessler Foundation.

KAPLAN: 05:13

Thank you.

BANKS-SMITH: 05:15

To learn more about career opportunities at Kessler Foundation, be sure and check out the program notes for links. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Listen to us on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, SoundCloud, or wherever you get your podcasts. This podcast was recorded on Friday, July 22nd, 2016, at 300 Executive Drive, West Orange, New Jersey, and was edited and produced by Joan Banks-Smith, creative producer for Kessler Foundation. [music]