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JAMES C. DEMAR

ASSOCIATE INVESTIGATOR
**BLAST-INDUCED NEUROTRAUMA
BRANCH OF THE WALTER REED
ARMY INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH**

WHAT GOT YOU INTERESTED IN THIS FIELD?

Neuroscience, i.e., study of the brain, is teasing apart the nature of our essence. It is a big black box in medicine. What is more fascinating than that?

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR SOMEONE ASPIRING TO BE A SCIENTIST IN YOUR FIELD?

I advise aspiring scientists to seek a lab that is doing preclinical or clinical studies, since that is where the best research funding is found. Applied research is favored over basic for-grant awards.

DID YOU HAVE A LIFE CHANGING EVENT THAT ALTERED YOUR PATH TO WHERE YOU ARE NOW?

Unfortunately, my mother suffered a traumatic brain injury in a severe car accident 11 years ago and is still nursing-home bound. Thus, I personally know the struggle of brain-damaged patients and their families. Part of our lab's research is to find drugs that can help heal traumatic brain injuries suffered by soldiers during exposure to bomb explosions during combat.

HOW DOES YOUR JOURNEY HELP OR INSPIRE OTHERS?

I try to show that despite personal adversity, you can succeed. I am always transparent about my failures so people can see how I work around them. Never let a setback put you down and out. Patience is key to overcoming obstacles.

DID YOU HAVE A MENTOR OR SOMEONE WHO HELPED INSPIRE YOU TO BECOME WHO YOU ARE TODAY?

My mother, who was a nurse, inspired me to become who I am today. She always fostered my curiosity in science and medicine while growing up. Also, my doctorate adviser was an excellent thesis mentor, as both a researcher and a practicing physician. He treated me kindly in both academic expectations and friendship.

WHAT IS MOST REWARDING ABOUT YOUR JOB?

I find it most rewarding to try experiments no one has done before, i.e., exploring "unchartered waters." Adding something new and permanent to the human knowledge base. Accepting that not all breakthroughs are instantaneous or even big.

WHY DOES THE WORLD NEED SCIENTISTS?

Scientists are the explorers that pave the way for a better tomorrow. Society has to grow to be happy; we are not just creatures of habit. Creativity is an essential part of what makes humanity great. I am a big fan of the arts, e.g., abstract painting, since we have the same underlying desire to change and enrich our world.