

# Member Spotlight

## Katie Freundlich, MD, Trusts There's a Better Way

### How She Aims to Help CYSHCNet Move its Research Forward

At age five, Katie Freundlich knew she'd be a pediatrician. She tried to consider other occupations as she aged. But when you know, you know.

Today, Freundlich is an assistant professor of clinical pediatrics at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt. She sees patients in the Program for Children with Medically Complex Needs at Vanderbilt.

"As I went through college and medical school, it became clear that I wanted to serve underserved populations," she said. "I've been fortunate to help families who have children with significant medical complexity with their care and with navigating the system."

Each day, Freundlich sees the high burden placed on families. She's in the trenches, helping them with prior authorizations, insurance approvals for equipment, and accessing home health services. She also listens to their experiences surrounding the challenges of coordination between the educational and the medical system.

"It's challenging, but it's really something that I enjoy doing," she said.



### The benefits of working within a network

Freundlich acknowledges the privilege of working in a clinical program that's designed to help families and children with special health care needs beyond their medical care.

**"Our practice is set up to help, and I think we do, but it's just one of the reasons that I love the work that the network is doing,"** she said. **"Working in this day-to-day, you can't help but think 'there must be a better way.' I love that the network is getting out there and trying to think about a better way to do it."**

Freundlich became lead of the CYSHCNet Dissemination Core in September.

"I think that the network serves as a novel idea generator and test chamber, with a lot of upfront input from important stakeholders," she said.

**"Really good ideas need help along the way to reach their full potential, so it's about getting the information in the hands of people who can also carry the baton for the next step."**

This is a challenge, considering the diffuse network of people in practice who serve disparate communities. It's why Freundlich believes CYSHCNet's network of partners is so important.

"Having our partner organizations help us get information out broadly to clinicians and families and people interested in policy and payment is our overall strategy," she said. "Getting all of the research out in the best possible way is an ambitious and lofty goal. **We're not looking to achieve perfection, but it's possible to achieve incremental improvement.**"

## Making a difference despite the challenges

Freundlich acknowledges the difficulties in the work she does in practice, as well as the systemic issues the network is aiming to improve.

"I have my wins. When I think about the things that have gone well, and the ways I've been able to help, it helps buoy me against some of the more frustrating moments," she said.

**"I'm not easily discouraged, and it helps to remember that, when things take longer than they should or take a lot more follow up, at the end of the day I've helped people. And that's what makes a difference. For me."**

**FUN  
FACT**

**Katie went to school with fellow CYSHCNet researcher Carolyn Foster, MD from 5th to 12th grade! Go Mounds View Public Schools!**

**"I'm a powerful organizer. I also tend to bring people along, using my organizational skills to get tasks done. So, you can expect to hear from me! The network is doing a lot. To keep track of it all and present that information takes a lot of organizational work, so I'll be putting my strengths to good use." ~ Katie Freundlich, MD**