

EASL International Recognition Award Recipient 2024: Prof. Norah Terrault

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In hepatology, as in other medical specialties, there are individuals whose contributions go beyond professional achievement and embody the essence of altruism, compassion, and dedication to the advancement of science. One such individual is Professor Norah Terrault, the 2024 awardee of the EASL International Recognition Award, who is a perfect example of excellence and integrity in our field.

Norah was born into a large family (she was the first born of eight siblings) in a rural farm area north of Edmonton, Canada. Her route to medicine was not a straightforward one as she first took a detour as a social worker in Toronto, underscoring her commitment to patient care, the cornerstone of her professional career.

Norah is currently Professor of Medicine and Chief of Gastroenterology and Liver Diseases at the Keck School of Medicine at University of Southern California. She received her MD from the University of Alberta in Canada and completed fellowships in Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology at the University of Toronto. There, she met one of the key figures of her career, Jenny Heathcote, who was the first woman recipient of the EASL International Recognition award back in 2010. She fostered Norah's academic curiosity in liver diseases and enabled her to pursue formal training as a Canadian Liver Foundation-funded research fellow under Terry Wright, another female icon in Hepatology at the University of California San Francisco, this was followed by a Master of Science degree in Public Health at University of California Berkeley.

Norah's scientific career has been focused mainly on viral hepatitis and, more recently, on liver transplant (LT) for alcohol-related liver disease and MASH (metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis), having led multiple clinical trials in these areas and currently leading/participating in NIH-funded clinical research networks such as the



HBV and MASH networks. She has authored over 500 peer-reviewed manuscripts, editorials, reviews and book chapters as well as US national guidelines for treatment of chronic hepatitis B and C.

A common feature in her research has been her focus on traditionally disadvantaged patient populations in need of LT. Her early studies regarding LT outcomes in HIV-infected patients, by demonstrating similar outcomes compared to those in HIV-uninfected patients, were revolutionary and led to changes in practice, having culminated in the HOPE Act. More recently, her unmatched ability to bring people together led to The American Consortium of Early Liver Transplantation for the Alcoholic that, again, has made a difference for patients with end-stage liver disease due to alcohol use-disorder who are now mostly considered LT candidates. She is particularly proud of the Adult-to-Adult Living Donor Liver Transplantation Cohort Study (A2ALL) a consortium of nine US liver transplant centers that brought together beloved col-

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leagues and mentors and showed evidence that adult-to-adult living donor LT is a viable option for liver replacement with outcomes that improve with center experience.

Norah is a renowned educator and mentor. She has guided countless students, researchers, and clinicians to pursue excellence in hepatology, empowering them to step into the spotlight while she supports from the sidelines. She has a unique ability to identify the best in people and to work on their strengths. Beyond hepatology providers, she has surrounded herself with advanced care providers, contributing to their professional recognition and allowing them to develop their full potential. As founder of ECHO-Plus, she was able to train and engage primary care providers in California to care for patients with viral hepatitis.

Beyond her professional expertise, Norah's commitment to knowledge dissemination knows no bounds, transcending geographical boundaries to make a meaningful difference internationally. Her invaluable contributions to HCV elimination efforts in Pakistan, through engagements with governmental bodies, non-profit organizations, and the public, underscore her unwavering commitment to public health on a global scale.

Last year AASLD, recognizing her outstanding trajectory, elected Norah to serve as the 2023 AASLD president. During her tenure, she not only worked on hepatitis C elimination with Francis Collins and on the development of the new metabolic-associated-liver disease nomenclature but she worked at strengthening ties with EASL and other scientific societies, working together at eliminating stigma in liver diseases. Her commitment to promote and empower women and to address inequities and disparities in access to leadership positions was evident during her tenure.

In addition to her undeniable passion and achievements in academics, mentoring and leadership, Norah is a modest, generous, authentic, caring, adventurous and fun individual. She possesses a rare ability to make others feel valued and seen.

Outside of medicine and despite distance and endless commitments, Norah keeps close ties with her family and often visits with them in her hometown where they play board games, a family tradition. Being the only professional in the family, she is considered the matriarch among her siblings and nieces.

Certainly, one cannot overlook the invaluable support provided by Norah's life partner, Rom, a fellow Canadian whom she met when they were both social workers. Rom, an ardent music enthusiast and skilled drummer, has been Norah's steadfast companion over three decades, offering unwavering support through every challenge they've faced. For Norah, nothing is better than knowing that Rom and their beloved dog, Smooch, eagerly await her return from work or travel, to go walking with Smooch while Rom prepares dinner and to just watch movies together.

A passionate traveler, avid cyclist and enthusiastic hiker, Norah finds great fulfillment in exploring the world. Her adventurous nature has led her to remote destinations like Amazonia, Mongolia and inland China, where she not only immerses herself in the local culture but also engages in discussions about challenging cases of viral hepatitis. Norah's willingness to try new foods and dive into various recreational activities, whether on land, in the air or at sea, reflects her fearless spirit and open-minded approach to life.

Throughout her endeavors, Norah maintains her grace and style, always keeping a keen eye on fashion. It is a remarkable feat for many of us to witness her consistent choice of high heels, a touch of elegance that she effortlessly incorporates into her daily life.

In summary, Norah is a life-changer, whether you have her in your life as a doctor, colleague, mentee or friend. This tribute to Norah is undoubtedly well-deserved. The acknowledgement from EASL through this award merely highlights her significant global contributions to hepatology and her pivotal role in mentoring the next generation of hepatologists.

Affiliations

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