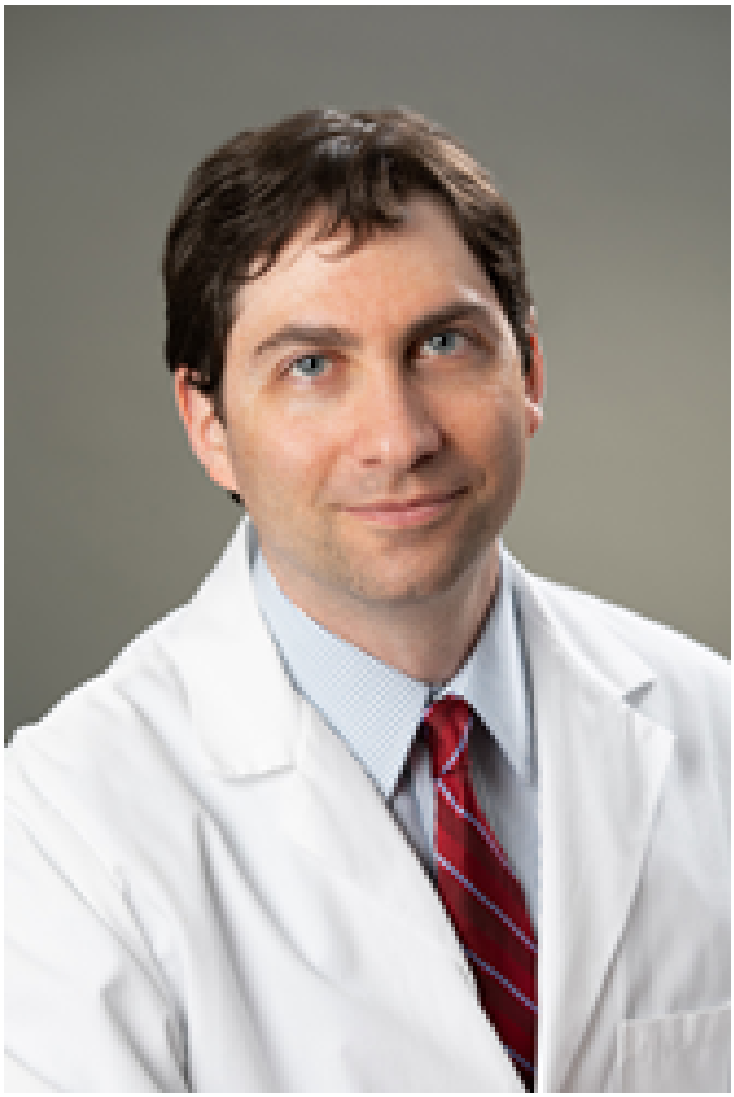
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Dr. Benjamin Freedman earns STEM CELLS Young Investigator Award

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Dr. Freedman's award-winning work combines induced pluripotent stem cells and CRISPR gene editing to establish human kidney organoids for disease modeling and regenerative medicine.



Benjamin “Beno” Freedman, Ph.D., is named STEM CELLS’s Young Investigator of 2018 for his groundbreaking work with organoids in studying kidney structure and disease. This award fosters advancements in the fields of stem cells and regenerative medicine by honoring a young researcher who is principal author of an article published in STEM CELLS that is deemed to have the most impact and to push the boundaries of novel and insightful research.

“We were trying to understand whether we can use organoids—complex structures we have generated from stem cells—to learn something new about how the kidney forms,” said Dr. Freedman. “We focused in on a very specific cell type that's found only in the kidneys called a podocyte. It gets its name because it has “feet” (Greek “podo”) coming off of it, at the bottom of the cell.”

Dr. Freedman’s award-winning work combines induced pluripotent stem cells and CRISPR gene editing to establish human kidney organoids for disease modeling and regenerative medicine. His work also establishes a powerful new tool for genetic studies of human podocyte development and disease.

“We are very happy to present this award to Dr. Freedman for his elegant work demonstrating that the protein podocalyxin is essential for normal kidney development,” said Dr. Jan Nolta, Editor-in-Chief of STEM CELLS. “The combination of cutting edge stem cell gene editing and organoid technologies used in this important report, and the implications for treatment of kidney disease, made Dr. Freedman the clear winner of our Young Investigator Award this year.”

Dr. Freedman received his Ph.D. in cell and developmental biology in 2009 from the University of California at Berkeley. He performed postdoctoral studies in the Renal Division of Brigham and Women’s Hospital, at Harvard Medical School. Along with the Young Investigator Award, he has earned several other awards, including the National Research Service Award from the NIH/NIDDK, the Young Investigator Grant from the National Kidney Foundation, and the Research Excellence Award from Brigham and Women’s Hospital. Dr. Freedman is currently an assistant professor of medicine at the University of Washington School of Medicine (UW) in Seattle and a member of the Kidney Research Institute and the Institute for Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine.