Cyndi asked me here because of my unique perspective of having worked in a very long research project from the bottom up. During that time I watched the research project develop from an idea into a reality that was far different from what anyone could have envisioned at the beginning. The brilliant PIs, through their questioning of an accepted norm, were inspired to challenge that norm, because, what they were seeing clinically, was different from what was commonly being publicized at the time. They bravely ventured forth to write a grant, and I'm sure there were re-writes, as there always are, but I doubt they had any idea what they were getting into when all this started. It was very much like the decision of having a baby. It's a great idea, and when it becomes a reality, a whole new life begins, uncharted, unique, full of ups and downs, twists and turns that you could never imagine ahead of time. So many other people become involved in this effort of raising a child. And the outcome? I don't know if Cyndi would agree with me, being a statistician, but it at least seems to be completely unpredictable! As funded researchers you start with a sense of being at the controls, and then life happens. So, I've put together a little presentation of what I like to call the Life Cycle of Research.

- So, first you start with a question, or idea, that becomes something you feel quite passionately about.

- As your idea grows legs, you search for funding. What's out there that would support your type of research? Who would be interested enough in your idea to fund your research? Typically there are trends in research funding and it's sometimes difficult to find the right fit. My neighbor, whose degree is in Public Health, has had a difficult time finding funding for an idea she has about using cortisol levels to measure stress created by living in poverty situations. It sounds like a no brainer to me, but until there is proven quality research, there will be no incentive for public policy to have concerns about the outcomes of people living in poverty. And little will be done to make the changes in society that will ultimately benefit ALL of us, since we are ALL effected by poverty, even if we know little about it firsthand. Her research project involves several disciplines: the medical aspects of cortisol, the sociological and psychological aspects of living in poverty, and the environmental aspects of certain types of housing. So how do you bridge that for funding. Luckily there is a trend at this time, to fund the muli-disciplinary approach to research. Her problem then, is finding which agency is most interested in her work.

- So, once you have found a few potential funding agencies, you will need to write your proposal. Each funding agency has a different set of requirements, and you will need to follow these requirements to the letter to be considered. Then, if the first one should turn you down, you will need to take what you have learned from that rejection to help streamline your proposal to the next funding agency you

submit to. All of this is good practice, by the way, for the distant future when you decide to write grants later, to continue your research, long after you thought it was going to be all over.

- So, now you are funded, excitement prevails yet there is a million and one things to consider as you begin hiring the staff you will need, setting up the infrastructure of office space, learning how to manage your fiscal budget, setting up liaisons with labs, or your own, the nuts and bolts of the day to day events that I can guarantee you haven't thought of. But it's an exciting time, and you will be rewarded in the long run.

- Now the fun begins. You get to actually realize your dream of proving your ideas or answering the burning questions that your were so passionate about to begin with.

- Then there is the analysis process. I'm sure Cyndi could speak to this far more eloquently than I, but I did sit in on all the meetings and I can tell you, this is quite a lengthy process, because you had no idea about all the results you would be getting, and even less what they mean! This is the time when the team really works together to see what is being created. It's a struggle sometimes because it may not be the results you initially expected. And, it's exciting because that means you have found out new and interesting results that no one else may have ever considered. Then you have to decide what to do with all this incredibly interesting information!

- So, finally you have your results. It may be quite different from what you or anyone else expected, but you have been the one to go where no one has gone before, and find this result. Good work!

- And you are rewarded by going back to the drawing board because now you have a million new questions and ideas that you just can't live with without further research.

- Finally, one day, either you will retire, or the funding agencies will retire you, and you will have to pack up all your belongings…yet you will be legally required to keep them sometimes as long as 7 years, depending on the type of research you are doing. And there are strict legal requirements about how you keep your research information. It's also hard to wind up your project since it's been so much a part of you and your accomplishments. But retirement is good, there are pina coladas on the beach to consider…