

PORTRAIT



CAMILLE PIGUET

NCCR-Synapsy clinician-scientist

“I hope I never have to choose between research and clinics”

Camille Piguet is supported by a grant for clinician researchers from Synapsy. She works part-time (50%) in the laboratory of Neurology and Imaging of Cognition headed by Prof. Vuilleumier at the University of Geneva (UNIGE) and dedicates the other 50% of her time to working in the Mood Disorder program directed by Prof. Aubry in the Department of Psychiatric Specialities at the University Hospital, Geneva.

In the middle of October, Camille Piguet gave birth to two babies: a little sister for her 3 year old and a rather big research project to investigate susceptibility to bipolar disorder, to be carried out with the NCCR Synapsy. While the first baby rounded her tummy, the second was launched with a serious push... and then she left on maternity leave. Camille Piguet doesn't want to give up anything; and so, she lives three lives: that of a clinician, a researcher and a mother.

“I always wanted to study medicine. But then, I also wanted to know how things work.” In the sixth year of medical school, Camille started an internship in the Neurology and Imaging of Cognition laboratory, run by Prof. Patrik Vuilleumier at the University of Geneva. It was here that she discovered the reality of imaging research: *“8 hours a day in front of a computer”*. Even so, she became enthusiastic about this exciting field of research, close to human beings and how they function. From this moment, the relationship between psychiatry and cognitive neuroimaging gels, and the doctor becomes a researcher, carrying out her MD-PhD on correlating neuronal function in thought disorders in mood disorders in the same laboratory, thanks to a grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation.

Four and a half years later, Camille is both a PhD and a mother. She obtains a clinician-researcher laboratory grant from Synapsy that enables her to continue in her research theme and embark on two professional careers: half-time in the laboratory and half time in the Mood Disorder program in the Department of Psychiatric Specialities, directed by Prof. Jean-Michel Aubry. *“Being able to work in this clinical department allows me to carry on in the same vein as my thesis work, while bringing new, exciting perspectives to my research”*, states the clinician-researcher.

Right before going on maternity leave Camille feels unruffled. *“A deep-rooted collaboration has been set up between the clinical department and the re-searchers and I feel happy that the project will carry on while I'm away”*. Things could get more complicated later. Although very organised, Camille Piguet, doesn't want to play superwoman *“With my three lives, it's often difficult to find a good balance”*.

Conducting two careers in parallel means specialising in psychiatry on the one hand (6 years full-time), and an academic career on the other, which inevitably involves work experience in a laboratory abroad. This may not be easy with two small children and a husband who is already established as a doctor. *“For the moment I haven't had to choose between doing one career or the other and I really hope I never have to make that choice as I am so passionate about them both”* maintains Camille Piguet, *“I think it will be rather a question of how much time I can spend on each”*.

Anyway, what drives Camille is to contribute one way or another to the understanding of psychiatric disorders. *“I'm really happy that I could take advantage of the opportunities that arose and feel so lucky to have such a stimulating and interesting career, and I must say I never hesitated for a moment to have my wonderful children”*.

By Anne-Muriel Brouet,
NCCR-Synapsy media officer
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