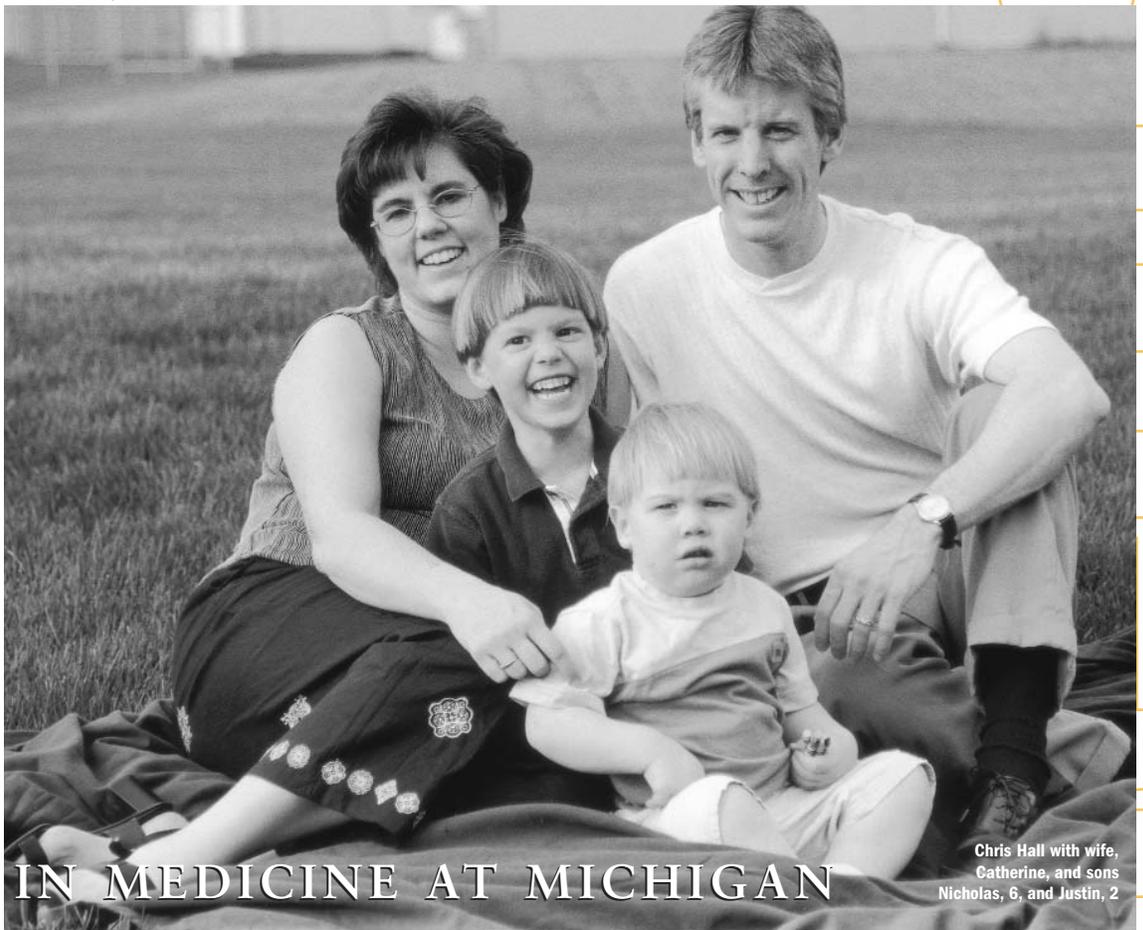


Photo: J. Adrian Wylie

Chris Hall, from Wellington, Ohio, who received his Ph.D. from the University of Texas—M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, is a postdoctoral fellow at the U-M Comprehensive Cancer Center, where he researches prostate cancer metastasis. In addition to his postdoctoral work, he is a husband and father of two.



Chris Hall with wife, Catherine, and sons Nicholas, 6, and Justin, 2

MOMENTS IN MEDICINE AT MICHIGAN

“Postdocs are sort of the driving force of the lab. We have the research experience to take a novel idea, one of our own or one based on the focus of the laboratory, all the way from inception to publication. At the same time, we’re developing our careers — learning from the principal investigator how to be independent researchers ourselves.

“The postdoctoral fellowship is considered the best time of your life, because you’re not in school and you’re not yet a principal investigator. It’s protected time. You need to be really excited about what you’re doing so you can come in every day and drive the research. But there is also a general angst among postdoc fellows.

“We’re spending longer periods of our careers as postdocs because it’s become difficult to transition into faculty positions — the positions that were predicted just 10 years ago aren’t there. This is creating a bottleneck at the postdoctoral training level.

“There can also be a sense of isolation as a fellow. It’s possible to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and never see another person. An individual needs social as well as academic roundedness to succeed. Networking is very important for maintaining that balance. This is why I helped found the University of Michigan Postdoctoral Association, whose mission is to foster scientific collaboration.

“Family is a big issue for most postdocs. I’ve decided to be equal part dad and researcher. I’m here nine hours a day, and I’m as productive as I can be during that time ... because in the evening I pick up my children from daycare and give my full attention to being a dad.” 

Interview by Ryan Sherriff

Those interested in learning more about the U-M Postdoctoral Association are invited to visit the association's Web site at www.med.umich.edu/pibs/postdoc.