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**NICOLE MIDEO**, University of Toronto

*Explaining the complex lives of malaria parasites*

Despite a wealth of biomedical research into the pathogenesis of infectious diseases, little is known about the basic biology of their etiological agents. For many parasites, we lack satisfying answers to questions such as: what is it specifically about the interaction between hosts and parasites that results in disease symptoms? How do these interactions differ between closely related parasite strains or species? And, which factors have shaped parasite traits that determine harm to host and infectiousness? Using a combination of theoretical and experimental approaches, my work has revealed processes that underlie within-host dynamics of experimental rodent malaria infections and how differences in these processes give rise to the variation observed in patterns of disease across parasite genotypes. I will present results that demonstrate the importance of resource availability and competition and show that such 'bottom-up' mechanisms can explain phenomena that are often attributed to immune-mediated processes.