Alumni spotlight: Kimiya Memarzadeh, PhD

In this Q&A session, Graduate School alumna Kimiya Memarzadeh, PhD, shares how her connections at the school and research training helped her land a job as a scientific manager of Biologics Development at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

Can you share some of your job duties as a scientific manager at MD Anderson Cancer Center?

“My role largely focuses on the strategic direction of the Biologics Development team at MD Anderson Cancer Center through business development and alliance management. I spend most of my time talking to biotech companies where there is potential for partnerships with the biologics development group within MD Anderson.

“In my role, I serve as a liaison between our corporate partners, internal subject matter experts, technical teams, business group, legal affairs, and leadership to guide the direction of partnerships, and advance clinical cell therapies in the most robust, efficient and streamlined way. In the early partnership stages, I participate in diligence and evaluation activities; put together business term-sheets, and technical scopes of work. As partnerships progress, I aide in managing budgets, timelines, and ensuring that major milestones are met.

“Additionally, I coordinate communications between Biologics Development and external parties including press releases, presentations and interviews.”

How did you get this job?

“I got this job through networking. My PhD advisor put me in contact with an old colleague of his. We ended up talking over dinner, and by the end, we mutually felt excited about the opportunity to work together.”

How did your GSBS training and degree help you with your career path?

“My technical training gave me a foundational understanding of cancer biology and tumorigenesis, the initial formation of a tumor in the body. However, more importantly, my training taught me how to think like a scientist – how to critically evaluate projects, put together project plans, how to analyze data, and evaluate it in the context of larger scale project decisions. Indirectly, my time at the Graduate School taught me how to think quickly on my feet, communicate clearly and effectively, and ask the right questions to be a problem-solver.

“Also, being a GSBS alumni and having spent five years during graduate school in the University of Texas System, afforded me a massive network of world-class researchers, clinicians, and thought leaders.”

Any advice or strategies you would give to current students who may be interested in your career?

“Be open-minded and creative in your job search – just because a job description isn’t exactly what you’re interested in (or have experience in) at the moment, doesn’t mean it can’t potentially become a position that grows and morphs with you.
“Be fearless in networking – don’t be afraid to ask for 15 minutes of someone’s time, to ask about their career path, to ask for advice. You can learn something from every one you talk to and you never know what might come of an interaction or impression you make.”

Memarzadeh graduate from the GSBS in 2019 with a PhD in neuroscience. Her advisor was Andy Bean, PhD.