

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



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Dream the biggest dreams and follow them

After completing her postdoctoral fellowship in Cancer Biology and Translational Research at MD Anderson in 2016 and serving as a project scientist for The Jackson Laboratory in 2017, Prashasnika Gehlot, Ph.D., knew she would find her way back to the MD Anderson campus one day.

“Please dream the biggest dreams and follow them,” says Gehlot when asked what advice she has for students and trainees, “They do come true when you are at MD Anderson.”

Following her own advice, Gehlot landed her dream job as director of research planning & development at the MD Anderson Applied Cancer Science Institute in January 2023. In this role, she supports scientists and faculty as they move their projects forward from early discovery to the clinical setting.

Gehlot says that numerous learning experiences during her fellowship contributed to her professional successes in scientific and project management. Serving as chair of the Postdoctoral Association allowed her to gain a deeper appreciation for cancer biology, build her independence and leadership skills, and discover her strengths in strategic planning and scientific research management. Gehlot also credits her mentors, Steven Curley, M.D., Cynthia Lockworth, D.V.M., and Robert Tillman, Ph.D., for pushing her to follow her dreams.

Although she grew up in a small town in India with limited exposure to the laboratory setting, Gehlot says her parents inspired her to pursue her dream to become a scientist. Her father would take her to the library to read Marie Curie books and to the Tata Memorial Centre cancer research labs in Mumbai, fostering her interest in cancer research.

Gehlot has passed the curiosity she had as a child along to her biggest personal achievement, daughter Priya, who at five years old has a vast knowledge of and love for the animal kingdom and wants to be an “animal doctor” when she grows up. In their free time, Priya and Gehlot build Legos and visit their favorite local attractions, the Houston Zoo and the Children’s Museum Houston.

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