



LEARNING FROM THE EXPERTS

Meet Mentee: Mana Alshehri, PhD, MSc, CABP

Mana Alshehri, PhD, MSc, CABP, is a research fellow at the Connell and O'Reilly Families Cell Manipulation Core Facility at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Harvard University; and a research scientist at King Abdullah International Medical Research Center in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Alshehri holds a PhD in cancer biology from the University of Calgary in Canada and completed the high-impact cancer research program at Harvard University. He has won several scientific awards from different international institutions, including the Arnie Charbonneau Cancer Institute, Canadian Institute of Health Research, Dubai Harvard Foundation for Medical Research and Middle East Molecular Biology Society.

AABB NEWS: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM?

ALSHEHRI: As an early-career scientist in biotherapies, I always look for opportunities to gain more experience, skills, networking and professional growth. After reading about the AABB PEP mentoring program, I found it was a perfect program to expand my knowledge, expertise and networking in biotherapies by interacting with experienced AABB members who have a strong and wide experience in biotherapies, blood banking and transfusion medicine.

AABB NEWS: CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR MENTORSHIP EXPERIENCE? WHAT MENTORSHIP GOALS DID YOU SET OUT TO ACHIEVE?

ALSHEHRI: So far, it has been a great experience to work with Dr. Vasiliki E. Kalodimou and learn from her a lot of leadership skills, particularly in establishing and supervising cord blood banks, how to solve all difficulties during the journey of establishing cord blood banks, and the potential of using them as viable resources for developing a wide range of cellular therapies that can be used to treat a variety of patients with diseases, including different types of cancer and genetic diseases.

AABB NEWS: WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST TAKEAWAY?

ALSHEHRI: Participating in the PEP mentoring program offers me several valuable benefits, but the major takeaway is the opportunity to gain guidance and insight from an expert in the field of biotherapies. These insights are very helpful in building professional skills and expanding networking that provide mentees access to new opportunities and resources.

AABB NEWS: WHAT ARE YOUR CAREER GOALS? HOW WILL THIS MENTORSHIP EXPERIENCE AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM YOUR MENTOR HELP YOU ADVANCE AS A RESEARCH SCIENTIST AND BIOTHERAPIES PROFESSIONAL?

ALSHEHRI: One of my main career goals is to contribute to advancing the biotherapies field in my country Saudi Arabia and the whole Middle East region by transferring knowledge, implementing quality measures and working with the experts in the region to establish more cord blood banks, cellular therapy centers and regenerative medicine programs to help in treating a wide range of patients. During the PEP mentoring program, Dr. Kalodimou shared her experience in establishing and directing cord blood banks and flow cytometry facilities and the quality and operational standards that should be considered to establish and operate such new facilities.

AABB NEWS: WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE ASPECT OF THE PROGRAM?

ALSHEHRI: One of my main favorite aspects of the program is the flexibility and informal nature of the meeting and discussion. During the meetings, we discussed lots of topics, including science, new and exciting biotherapies products in the market, leadership skills and others. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Kalodimou for the insight and expertise she shared with me during the past six months. Thank you, Dr. Kalodimou.