

Nikita Sharma

Born: India

Currently: University of Miami, Miami, Florida



My grandfather was the strongest man I knew, and as his only granddaughter, I was immensely loved. I was 7 when he passed away. As a child, I couldn't understand why he had to go so early.

As a 13-year-old, when my parents told me that my grandfather died of gastric cancer, I wanted to know what cancer was. What was this horrible disease that took the most important man in my life away from me? I read everything I could about cancer and found out that, at that time, only 5% of all the patients who had metastasis due to gastric cancer lived beyond 5 years. My grandfather lived only 6 months after his diagnosis. Another thing that shook me to my core was that gastric cancer has a genetic component to it, which meant that there was a strong possibility that I might lose my father to it too -- something I could not bear. When I had a chance to decide what I wanted to do with my life - I chose Science.

I decided to pursue my master's in pharmacology in America at the University of Minnesota. The initial transition from India to America was tough! I didn't even know how to open a bank account, let alone get an apartment, sign a lease, get internet! I eventually figured it out and braved the Minnesotan winter and discovered Minnesota was the perfect place for a young immigrant like me. People were very kind, and I found wonderful mentors who are not only supportive of my research and passion for science, but also care for me personally. I could not be the scientist that I am today without them. I hope I can make them proud!