

Mike Luzzio

Born: Kentucky

Currently: Skyhawk Therapeutics, Boston, Massachusetts



My dad was my greatest science hero. He and my mother were first-generation Americans. He was a microbiologist and worked for the Surgeon General. I remember going to the lab with him on weekends and tinkering while he worked. My father told me that at the end of the day you need to feel good about what you've contributed, was it positive? does it make the world a little better? Science offered me a path to do that.

After college I went into industry and became a drug discoverer. My first project out of school was an oncology project and I've focused on oncology ever since. Cancer is a problem that hasn't been solved, so why should I do something else when we haven't solved this problem? There are other motivations as well. My wife has had cancer three times, my father died of cancer, my grandfather died of cancer and two of my brothers-in-law have had or died of cancer. I see my work as a fight against the dark beast of cancer.

I am passionate about what I do; it's no different than being a sculptor or a painter – first there's nothing but a glimmer of an idea and, over time, with hard work, creativity and endurance -- always endurance-- there's a drug that can help people. I do it because I love it, so it's not really work.