

Kanwal Mahmood

Born: Pakistan

Currently: University of Maryland School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland



My family moved to the US from Pakistan when I was 18 months old, so essentially, I am a first-generation American.

It was hard for my parents as immigrants - my father worked four jobs when I was growing up, - but education was their focus. No one in my family was in the sciences or had even gotten a secondary education, so I had no direction or help in that area. But I'm really a hard worker; and I'm very focused. I know what I want and I know I can do it. I just pushed myself towards it. I don't allow myself to give up.

I studied pre-med as an undergrad and was planning on going to medical school, until my junior year of college, when I joined a research lab. There I realized that I didn't want to be the one administering therapies, I wanted to be the one who was developing them. That is why I chose research.

I love the diversity in the lab — I have worked in labs where the lab manager is from India, some of the scientists are American-born, the chemist is from Japan and I contribute my Pakistani culture. We share different approaches on how we do our research, and we come from different backgrounds, but we are coming together for a common goal. It makes things more dynamic -- and the parties are more fun too!