

Tanya Panchenko

Born: Soviet Union

Currently: New York University Langone Medical Center, New York, New York



Growing up, I was extremely fortunate to have patient and thoughtful parents who humored the many questions I threw their way. I remember that on some nights, instead of story time, I would question my dad on the composition of matter and atomic theory, and he would oblige and walk me through everything step by step, down to molecules, protons and electrons.

I came to the U.S. with my parents when I was 12. My parents were refugees fleeing the Soviet Union. We moved to Brooklyn and it was tough getting integrated. I was an extremely average student, in part because of the language barrier. So, my mom invested a lot of time, sitting down with me, trying to figure out how I could get a passing grade in school. It wasn't until the end of high school and beginning of college, when I became intensely interested in DNA and epigenetics, and my love of science began.

Currently, I am a senior scientist working at NYU, at the crossroads of academic research and clinical application. We are working closely with cancer scientists who identify drug targets and we design antibody drugs to go after these targets. I feel as though I am in a place of great awe and responsibility. It's extremely rewarding and humbling to have the potential to positively impact people's lives - I think it is a unique position scientist have, shared by only a handful of other professions.