



Dr. Nika Shakiba

Postdoctoral Fellow,
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Hometown: Toronto

Nika Shakiba is a talented early-career scientist, now pursuing her postdoctoral fellowship at MIT in Boston, who continues to support her Canadian science roots by being a positive role model for aspiring young students who are interested in research-based careers. Nika is working to better understand how to make stem cells robust, safe, and efficient for many types of research and therapies that could potentially change the way we fight diseases.

Who is your female role model in the science sector?

While I can't say that I have had a single female role model in science, I have been lucky to be constantly inspired by the women around me – my peers and mentors – in engineering and science. These women are not afraid to ask questions and seek answers. There are indeed quite a few strong women researchers in the Stem Cell Network and other networks I have had the privilege to be a part of so inspiration has not been in short supply.

What has been your career highlight?

Outside of the opportunities I have had to engage in collaborative interdisciplinary research projects with groups in Canada and beyond, which has led to some exciting findings that we have since shared with the scientific community, my highlight has been in connecting with like-minded peers across Canada to bring stem cell research to the next generation of curious minds. I have been involved with [StemCellTalks](#), a national symposium that brings the science and ethics of stem cells to high school students, and have had the opportunity to lead the expansion of the event to nine cities across Canada.

Seeing “Eureka” moments and the innate curiosity in next generations of scientists is extremely fulfilling and helps motivate the research I do.

What career advice do you have for the next generation?

My experience has shown me the impact that good mentors can have on the growth and trajectory of trainees. I have been lucky enough to have fantastic mentors, like my PhD supervisor Dr. Peter Zandstra, that continue to challenge me. My advice is twofold: find good mentors and be a good mentor by empowering future generations of researchers. Above all, don’t lose sight of your passion for science and your motivations for doing research in the first place. I find that communicating my love of science through outreach helps me keep this passion alive.