

Insights from the Network

Summer camp for scientists: A 2023 program participant's reflections on Summer by Design

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“Everything interesting happens at intersections,” remarked Dr. Michael May, President & CEO of the Centre for Commercialization of Regenerative Medicine (CCRM), as he welcomed our 2023 Summer by Design cohort to the program. As a scientist with multidisciplinary interests spanning bioethics, policy, law, communication, and business, I was instantly reassured. As I near completion of graduate school, the prospect of carving out a career path that will balance my array of interests feels daunting. For this reason, “everything interesting happens at intersections” resonated with me, inspired me, and set the tone for the days to come.

Summer by Design is an intensive eight-day program for PhD and postdoctoral trainees from across Canada and internationally. It is designed to introduce trainees to crucial topics involved in the commercialization and translation of regenerative medicine discoveries. Summer by Design is hosted by the University of Toronto’s Medicine by Design initiative, in partnership with CCRM, Rotman School of Management, and Stem Cell Network.

It is challenging to articulate my reflections on a program as unique and impactful as Summer by Design, so I’ll start by drawing a parallel to the familiar. I grew up going to and working at a summer camp, an experience that constantly challenged me to step outside my comfort zone, taught me new skills, and introduced me to a network of amazing people. In these aspects, Summer by Design was a lot like a summer camp for scientists.



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As a basic scientist, it was a big step out of my comfort zone to participate in such an immersive program covering topics crucial to the business of regenerative medicine. In doing so, I learned more about:

- The state of the regenerative medicine industry and experimental derisking for cell and gene therapies
- The commercialization of regenerative medicine
- Intellectual property
- Technology strategy
- Regulatory affairs and clinical translation
- Economic reimbursement and technology adoption
- Life sciences' capital markets/early-stage diligence and fundraising
- Marketing
- Biomanufacturing in regenerative medicine

These topics were taught as modules in formats ranging from lectures to business school case study discussions, led by experts in the respective areas. In addition to the modules, we had an engaging panel discussion about accelerating research and building a regenerative medicine innovation ecosystem. The panel featured experts from [adMare Bioinnovations](#), [Creative Destruction Lab](#), [Lumira Ventures](#), and [MaRS Discovery District](#). This was followed by an afternoon focused on the journeys in commercialization of various entrepreneurial scientists. A central message I took away from these different sessions was that the business of regenerative medicine is a team sport. Framing the business of regenerative medicine as a team sport broadened my concept of what a career beyond academia could look like.

I had a better grasp on the “what”, but was still seeking clarity on the “how”: How do I carve out that career path? Summer by Design provided ample opportunities to network with invited speakers throughout the program as well as self-directed meetings with organizations in Toronto’s regenerative medicine ecosystem, to ask the “how”. There were two take home messages here: (1) Networking is crucial, but be tactful about who you engage with. (2) Few people’s journey to their current career is linear.

Perhaps the biggest networking opportunity during Summer by Design was with fellow program participants. The enthusiasm, curiosity, and drive of each participant was palpable throughout the course and was highlighted during the end-of-program Scientific Storytelling Competition, where each participant pitched their research.



Me, Melissa, and Priye
Scientific Storytelling Competition



As part of the program, we received coaching from [Talk Boutique](#) to further develop our presentation and pitch skills. Program participants leveraged this coaching in their pitches on regenerative medicine research to treat diabetes, heart disease, hearing loss, burns, vision loss, osteoarthritis, lung disease, neurodegenerative diseases, and more.

Beyond discussing our research, at mealtimes we shared our dreams and aspirations, what inspires us, what drives us, and what scares us. By attending Summer by Design, I have gained an international network and support system of not just colleagues, but friends. I look forward to our paths crossing again and the interesting results we might produce at these intersections, while building our careers.

In January, I attended a Careers Beyond Academia webinar hosted by Stem Cell Network and Medicine by Design. While discussing the transition from academia to industry, one of the Speakers, Ryan Mitchell from [Satellos Bioscience](#), told us “Apply to Summer by Design”, and I’m so glad I did.

