

My experience at Center for Reproductive Medicine, Cleveland Clinic, Ohio, USA

“Success is not measured by what you accomplish but by the opposition you have encountered and the courage with which you have maintained the struggle against overwhelming odds”... this is the philosophy of my life. My time spent at the Center for Reproductive Medicine during 2010 can be concluded in one simple sentence,” The strength to withstand anything”. The path of my PhD program had been full of hurdles from the beginning, till I found CRM as my final platform for success.

My bond with CRM dates back to 2006 when I joined as an ART trainee. Anxious and with trembling hands on the very first day of my training, I thought I will never be able to master all those highly sophisticated techniques but with each passing day, I mustered up courage and became more and more confident. Finally the last day of my training, when asked as to how my experience had been, I still remember my exact words, “The first day when I joined I thought I’ll never be able to make it but today when I’m leaving I’m sure I can be the best in Pakistan”.

Center for Reproductive Medicine comprises of a remarkable group of highly skilled professionals whose basic faith lies in strong teamwork, under a perfect leadership of Dr Ashok Agarwal. A highly polished and skilled professional with exceptional leadership qualities who knows exactly how to lead his team. Dr Agarwal is an extremely dedicated teacher who feels no pain in covering any shortcomings of his trainees. Easy to communicate, any time and every time, Dr Agarwal is always ready to put every effort to bring out the best in his fellows. A perfectionist by nature, he always makes sure that all tasks are completed well in time by his fellows. Upon my arrival Dr Agarwal said, “Arozia, in two weeks time you’ll be a totally different person professionally” and as time went by I could see myself reshaping. A person, so very nice at heart, Dr Agarwal does not leave the minutest thing unattended. His vision and far-sightedness, sincerity and dedication for his department is what makes CRM an outstanding department and one of its own kind in the world. He undoubtedly is an icon in his very own specialty.

Although working independently and doing research under my own initiative was daunting at first but the staff and my fellow colleagues because of their very supportive and cooperative attitude, allayed any doubts that I had. The facilities were excellent and

the skills I learned were taught to the utmost perfectionism. “You are never a loser until you quit trying”, so initially it was very difficult to imagine what research may involve without trying it first, but I was lucky enough to have been given an open opportunity to do trial runs and pilot experiments before embarking upon the real thing. I learnt to use new computer programs in short taught courses and developed my presentation skills in weekly group meetings and journal club. I also improved my problem solving skills in multiple group tasks and discussions with other PhD students which also provided me an opportunity to hear about their research experiences and activities. This opened my eyes to a range of research opportunities as I worked independently on various interesting and exciting projects. I also had an opportunity of gaining skills like statistical software, literature searches, not forgetting to mention all techniques related to Diagnostic Andrology. I overcame many natural fears of working independently and felt increasingly confident to take up any task assigned to me. I also learnt to manage my time more efficiently and overcame problems and issues in my work.

2010 Summer Internship Program, a unique program of its own kind, was another experience worth mentioning. I was given the opportunity to act as an instructor for one of the very creative bench projects. Interaction with a bunch of extremely intelligent and confident young interns was not only exciting but also challenging as I had to come up to the expectations of both my students and mentors. A multiracial interaction of people from all over the world, this internship program served as a perfect platform for knowing different cultures as well as technical skills from expertise gathered all under one roof.

A strong believer of teamwork, Dr Agarwal’s team was all amalgamated like pearls in a string. Everybody worked with extreme dedication and sincerity. Always ready to help each other, no one ever hesitated to jump into the given task overcoming all odds.

I would like to thank Dr Rakesh Sharma, my main research co-ordinator. An extremely fine person both professionally and at heart. He had the patience to stand by me, at a stretch of hours just making sure that I grasped all techniques proficiently by the end of the day. Extremely dedicated and sincere towards his department, he knows the art of training his research fellows diligently. His belief in my success persevered me to work even harder. I could just simply never say no to whatever task was assigned to me

by him in the research lab. I would not hesitate saying that Dr Rakesh Sharma, under Dr Agarwals dynamic leadership, is definitely the backbone of the bench research going on in CRM.

Many thanks to Dr Sajal Gupta for her persistent co-operation without which I would have never been able to manage scheduling donors and patients for my PhD project. I would'nt forget thanking Dr Ali Ahmady, from whom there was always so much to learn and for his willingness to teach and co-operate at all times.

Thank you to my respected chairmen, Dr Edmund Sabanegh and Dr Eric Klein for giving me the opportunity to work in this outstanding department.

Bundles of thanks to my best colleagues ever, Luiz Carvalho, Franciele Lunardi, Saleem Bani Hani, Reecha Sharma, Aspinder Singh, Dr Hammada, Ehab Barakat, Aparna Thiyagarajan, Abhishek Deshpande, Stefan du Pleissis, Rajinder Singh, Lisa Sullivan , Debbie Garlak and Arlette Houseworth for their persistent co-operation.

The lab at CRM was like my second home where every single moment spent is like a golden memory. "Once a member of CRM, always a member of CRM". It is all because of Dr Agarwals endless efforts that any fellow joining CRM develops an eternal bond with the department. The whole amount of work I've learnt here is an invaluable asset for all times to come. Thank you Dr Agarwal for believing in my capabilities and letting me accomplish all my dreams. I'm going back home successful and in flying colors with a wide smile on my face.

Thank you for everything CRM



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