

Kelsey Maxwell-Acosta, Ph.D.

Clinical Scientist

ExecuPharm

Dallas, Texas



All roads lead to and from research

Kelsey Maxwell-Acosta's number one love is *marine biology* and has been since she was a child. There is no definitive moment she can pinpoint that sparked her interest in ocean life. And today as a certified advanced open water scuba diver, she is perfectly fine being in the depths of the ocean and not be able to see her hand in front of her face yet on land she has a profound fear of heights. *What?*

So how did Kelsey's love of marine biology lead her to becoming an oncology-focused clinical scientist? Finding herself at a make-or-break point for a career choice, she was torn between medical school or marine biology. During her pursuit she read about biomedical research programs and saw how this field would allow her to focus on endless topics, including medicine and marine biology.

Today Kelsey is a clinical scientist with a major pharmaceutical company and serves on a team studying a new oncology drug. Kelsey's interest in Ras pathway signaling has not waned since her days as a student at the University of Texas MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences.

On the surface Kelsey's career choice seems to be quite different than her undergraduate marine biology work where she spent time in Mexico collecting data on sea grass beds which are primary food sources for turtles, or studying coral research. Yet she is still doing research, which feeds her insatiable desire to *know as much as she can about everything*.

<i>MD Anderson School(s) from which I graduated</i>	The University of Texas MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences
<i>Degree</i>	Ph.D. Biochemistry & Cell Biology
<i>Graduation Year</i>	2018
<i>Current Employer</i>	ExecuPharm
<i>Current City</i>	Dallas, Texas
<i>Current Position</i>	Clinical Scientist

<p><i>What is your career motivation?</i></p>	<p>I can't pinpoint an exact motivation other than I've always been biology oriented. I'm not as interested in taking something apart to see <i>how</i> it works as I am about learning <i>why</i> it works. I've always wanted to learn as much as I can about everything. If someone tells me something works, I jump in feet first to find out <i>why</i> it works.</p>
<p><i>Who are your mentors?</i></p>	<p>Dr. John Hancock and Dr. Yong Zhou were instrumental in my work at GSBS. Both had an open-door policy and always made time to talk with me and give me feedback on my project. They encouraged me to attend conferences and facilitated introducing me to others in the field. I really enjoy talking with experts outside of my normal circle as their fresh point-of-view broadens my scope of my field.</p> <p>John Hancock, MB, BChir, PhD, is a professor and chairman of the UT Health McGovern Medical School, Department of Integrative Biology and Pharmacology; Vice Dean of Basic Research; Executive Director, The Brown Foundation Institute Molecular Medicine; John S. Dunn Distinguished University Chair in Physiology and Medicine</p> <p>Yong Zhou, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the UTHealth McGovern Medical School Department of Integrative Biology and Pharmacology.</p>
<p><i>Works of Interest</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rac1 Nanoscale Organization on the Plasma Membrane Is Driven by Lipid Binding Specificity Encoded in the Membrane Anchor • Clustering of Rac1: Selective Lipid Sorting Drives Signaling • Bile acids modulate signaling by functional perturbation of plasma membrane domains
<p><i>Graduate school from Which I received a degree</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University of Texas MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences – 2018 Ph.D. – Biochemistry & Cell Biology
<p><i>Undergraduate school from which I received a degree.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University of Texas at Austin - 2012 BS – Marine & Freshwater Biology
<p><i>High school from which I received a degree.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newman Smith High School - 2008 Carrollton, Texas
<p><i>Family</i></p>	<p>Married, no children</p>

What's your story?

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