

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Liam Lee, Ph.D.

Senior Medical Director
Biomarkers and Diagnostics Strategy Team Lead

AstraZeneca
Gaithersburg, Maryland

An unparalleled experience

When Liam Lee, Ph.D., transferred to MD Anderson's School of Health Professions (SHP) in 2009 to complete his undergraduate degree in Molecular Genetic Technology, he knew the experience would be unlike any other in his academic career.

While studying at MD Anderson, Dr. Lee conducted genetic research in the department of Molecular Pathology, obtained his Molecular Biology Board Certification from the American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP) and completed a fellowship with Pfizer.

After receiving his bachelor's in 2010, Dr. Lee earned his Master of Science in Biotechnology with a focus on Molecular Biology at Johns Hopkins University and his Ph.D. in Pathology at the University of Cambridge, where he also completed a fellowship with Sanofi.

Dr. Lee credits his experience at SHP and MD Anderson, as well as SHP associate dean and Molecular Genetic Technology program director Peter Hu, Ph.D., for cultivating his career and often encourages others to pursue a similar path at SHP.

"Dr. Hu's program has trained the greatest number of ASCP board-certified clinical molecular technologists in the nation, with many of us now leading various fields as managers, physicians, directors, etc.," Dr. Lee said. "I'd highly recommend connecting with Dr. Hu and considering his program for any students or trainees interested in pursuing molecular diagnostics, as his program changed my career."

He added this advice for current SHP students: "MD Anderson provides a truly unparalleled experience in the breadth and depth of expertise in oncology and passion for patient care. Make sure to take full advantage of that environment by going beyond what is expected of your studentship or training program; for instance, seek out additional mentors/research opportunities and attend as many grand rounds as possible across all departments

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whenever you have spare time.”

When asked about career development and timelines in his field, Dr. Lee provided a simple piece of advice.

“The impact of each calendar year varies based on the amount of active effort and thought you put in – so don’t plan years, plan the specific steps to get there instead.”

Currently, Dr. Lee serves as the Senior Medical Director, Biomarkers and Diagnostics Strategy Team Lead at AstraZeneca in Gaithersburg, Md. There, he manages the development and refinement of medical strategies for drug launches, external predictive biomarker and diagnostics collaborations, and real-world evidence generation studies.

“I always wanted to make a broad impact on patient care through discovery of new predictive biomarkers and novel therapeutics,” he said. “I imagined pursuing this goal as an academic research professor, but I learned through my fellowships with Pfizer and Sanofi that bio-pharma leadership roles allow for broader contributions and impacts, as I currently manage medical strategy development for more than a dozen novel biomarker-therapeutic pairs across various pathways and mechanisms of action.”

Outside of work, Dr. Lee, his wife and his two children enjoy weekend adventures and daily video game challenges, exercise sessions and dance parties. He is also passionate about giving back and staying connected with his alma mater. In his free time, he teaches courses at SHP and is so beloved by his students that in 2018, they nominated him for the MD Anderson SHP Outstanding Educator Award.

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