



Afroz Rashnonejad, M.Sc., Ph.D.

Dr. Afroz Rashnonejad is a Postdoctoral Fellow in Center for Gene Therapy, in Nationwide Children's Hospital, Columbus, Ohio. Dr. Rashnonejad received her Ph.D. degree in May 2017 from the Ege University, Turkey, in Biotechnology with a focus on intra-uterine gene therapy for Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) using AAV vectors under the mentorship of Prof. Dr. Ferda Ozkinay and co-advisor Prof. Dr. Guangping Gao (Director of gene Therapy Center, University of Massachusetts Medical School). She also has two Master of Science degrees in Microbiology (Tehran University, Iran) and Stem Cells (Ege University, Turkey). During her PhD, she traveled to Dr. Gao's lab each year to master AAV vector production for gene therapy purposes. Dr. Afroz Rashnonejad's doctoral research was the first AAV-based gene therapy in animal models in Turkey and in Ege university for neurodegenerative disorders. Immediately after graduation, she started her postdoctoral studies in Dr. Scott Harper's lab in the Center for Gene therapy, Nationwide Children's Hospital, Columbus, Ohio, USA. Now, her research focused on developing new gene therapy approaches using AAV-based RNA inhibitory (RNAi), Exon Skipping, and CRISPR technologies for autosomal dominant neuromuscular disorders such as Facioscapulohumeral Muscular Dystrophy (FSHD), and Charcot-Marie-Tooth (CMT). Dr. Rashnonejad is Associate member of American Society of Gene and Cell therapy (ASGCT) and also a member of ASGCT New Investigator Committee. She initiated AAV.CRISPR-Cas13 gene therapy in Harper lab and was honored to have twice received the ASGCT "Excellence in Research Award" at the 2019 and 2020 Annual Meetings for developing this therapy for FSHD. Dr. Rashnonejad is an elected **Chair of Research Institute Trainee Association** (RITA) in Nationwide Children's Hospital. She recently filed three patents for new gene therapy products. In her free time, she enjoys painting, gardening, traveling, watching movies, and cuddling with her two Ragdoll cats, Lilac and Barfi, and her new puppy, Teddy.